

ONE FOR THE MONEY, A BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL

# BLUE BOOK

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*The Banshee Comes to America*, by HUGH FULLERTON  
HOWARD RIGSBY • ROBERT MILL • GORDON KEYNE  
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" 'Tis no human sound," said the Touill, getting pale. "I'd not be after sayin' 'twor a banshee. But 'tis hopin' I am thot if it *is* the banshee, she will howl over the roof av the O'Shea." (Drawn by Jeremy Cannon to illustrate, "The Banshee Comes to America," beginning page 28.)



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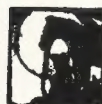
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# BLUE BOOK



NOVEMBER 1940

MAGAZINE

VOL. 72, NO. 1

## A Complete Book-Length Novel

**One for the Money**

*Illustrated by Percy Leason*

By William Edward Hayes 121

## A Novelette

**The Banshee Comes to America**

*Illustrated by Jeremy Cannon*

By Hugh Fullerton 28

## Seven Short Stories

**Golden Slippers**

*Illustrated by Hamilton Greene*

By Robert R. Mill 4

**Unlike Leonardo**

*Illustrated by Frederic Anderson*

By Howard Rigsby 18

**South Seas Calling**

*Illustrated by Orson Lowell*

By Dana Burnet 48

**Two Swordsmen of Gascony**

*"The World Was Their Stage"—No. VIII* *Illustrated by John Richard Flannigan*

By H. Bedford-Jones 52

**The Giant in the Cañon**

*Illustrated by Peter Kuhlhoff*

By Bigelow Neal 65

**Red Fog**

*Illustrated by Percy Leason*

By Louis Kaye 74

**Trawler Men**

*Illustrated by Cleveland Woodward*

By Captain Dingle 112

## A Serial Novel

**Gold Ahoy!**

*Illustrated by L. R. Gustavson*

By Gordon Keyne 84

## Prize Stories of Real Experience

**The City Beneath the Sea**

Seeking sunken treasure, he found the submerged pirate stronghold of Port Royal.

By Lieutenant Harry Rieseberg 182

**Savage Paradise—II**

Another chapter from a forthcoming book of African adventure.

By Besse Thomé 184

**Mrs. Stripes**

One of her children stowed away in his car—and a traffic officer didn't like it.

By Cliff Maxwell 187

**To Be Shot at Dawn**

A one-time lieutenant-general in the Chinese army is condemned to death in Nicaragua.

By Russell Hearn 190

**Your Fellow-Readers Write Us**

110

**Cover Design**

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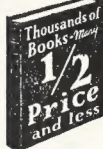
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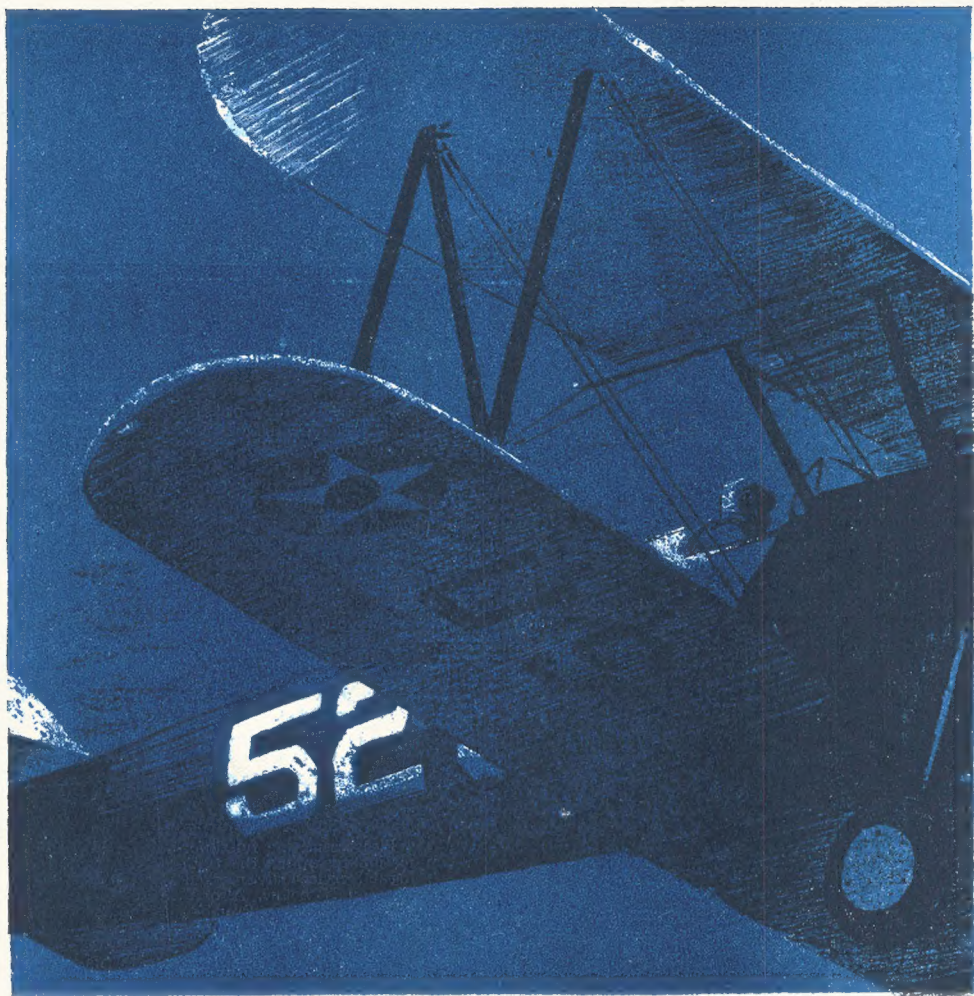
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*How the war came to the Caribbean—and was driven back to Europe again. . . . By the author of the Tiny David stories.*

WE sat around a table in Max Billgray's Tropical Bar. The flames of two tiny candles, which provided the only light for the vast room, flickered and sputtered as they fought for life in the hot, damp night air. Heavy drapes covered the doors and windows, which otherwise would have afforded a view of the harbor of Colon, and the Atlantic entrance to the Panama Canal. This was the second year of the war; and black-outs, formerly peculiar to Europe, had moved to the American hemisphere.

On the table before us, resting upon a velvet cloth, was a battered object that once had been a golden slipper.

"You newspaper chaps are like turkey buzzards," said Lieutenant Hugh Davenport, of the United States Navy. His smile and his lazy Southern drawl com-

bined to rob the statement of any offense. "You sense when a country is sick, and you hover about, waiting for it to die."

There was a brief silence, while our thoughts went back over troubled years.

Carmody, of the *Star*, spoke first:

"I was in Prague when the Czechs were sold down the river." He turned to Davis, of the *Globe*. "You caught the last car out of Warsaw when Adolf and Joe ganged up to steal Poland. Later, I reached Finland in time to see how brave men die. Shall we plead guilty, Dave?"

Davis pondered as he sipped his drink. "No," he decided. "Make him prove it. We were hours late on the Scandinavian countries. No turkey buzzard would have pulled a boner like that."

Lieutenant Davenport grinned as he reached for a bottle.



# Golden Slippers

By ROBERT R. MILL



"Skip the ancient history," he ordered, "and get up to date. How about the Balkans?"

"I was there, waiting." The admission came from Bruce, of the *Combined Press*, who pointed a finger at Healey, of the *Signal*. "You were in Rome when the silent partner decided it was time to take an active interest in the business."

"Right," Healey assented. "And from there I went to the Orient to watch the other end of the Axis function. It wasn't a pretty sight."

"I'll have to cop a plea on the Low Countries," Carmody admitted. "For more than a month I commuted between The Hague and Brussels, but when it came, my paper decided the time hadn't been wasted."

There was triumph on Lieutenant Davenford's face as he exclaimed:

"Glorified turkey buzzards!"

Lieutenant Joseph Fortwin, who wore wings, ventured a slight correction:

"International pall-bearers, I'd say."

Mr. Davenford retained his dignity.



"Let's not quibble about technicalities. The thing that concerns us most is that these turkey buzzards, or international pall-bearers, have arrived in Panama."

The pause that followed was a bit awkward.

"They came too late!" That flat assertion came from George Clayton, who wore a linen suit that was none too fresh, and who, we knew in a vague sort of way, was connected with the Foreign Service.

"What do you mean?" Carmody demanded.

Clayton leaned forward.

"You came expecting the Canal to be the target of the next Blitzkrieg. That technique is successful only when the victim is caught unawares, and is inferior in strength. That isn't the condition today, so there will be no Blitzkrieg." He paused. "The first Blitzkrieg, the one you chaps missed, almost succeeded."

"The first Blitzkrieg?" The question came in a chorus, followed by "Where?" . . . "When?" . . . "Why didn't we hear about it?" . . . "What saved us?" We all turned our fire on him.

Clayton raised his hand.

"I'll answer your last question first." He picked up the slipper, and sat gazing at it reverently. "This saved us."

Carmody pushed his drink aside.

"I'll bite. There was a Blitzkrieg. It almost succeeded. This golden slipper saved us. Now tell us the story."

Lieutenant Davenport grinned.

"That's why we invited you here tonight, and that's why we brought out the slipper. But it's Clayton's story."

The man from the Foreign Service shook his head.

"Only part of it," he protested. "I happened to be in the store when the slipper was sold. That was almost two years ago. I was young then. God, I was young!"

Lieutenant Davenport indicated the aviator.

"Fortwin will pick up the yarn when Clayton quits."

"More slipper!" Carmody demanded.

Lieutenant Fortwin smiled.

"Yes. I was stationed in Puerto Rico then. We found the slipper on a golf-course. My part is very brief. Davenport can finish the tale."

"Fair enough," Carmody said. "Now get started."

**G**ET out a map of the West Indies. Locate the dragon-shaped island Haiminga, that is a dot in the deep blue

of the Caribbean. Cape Haiminga probably isn't marked. That doesn't matter. Ink in an "X" at the northwestern end of the dot, and that will represent the tiny republic's one and only seaport with a decent harbor. That harbor, incidentally, is a very good one.

And now pick up your ruler. Draw one line from the "X" to the Panama Canal, which is the lifeline of the United States. Draw another from the "X" to Puerto Rico, which is our version of Gibraltar. Measure both lines, and after consulting the scale on your map, reduce the inches to miles. Don't bother to check the results. Various persons, in various parts of the world, have experienced that same shock of surprise.

**W**ITH the necessary paper-work out of the way, you can move on now to George Clayton. Not the capable, kindly George Clayton who sat with us, but a cocky, intolerant version, just out of college, and pathetically sure that he knew all the answers.

He divided all people into two general classes, Americans and foreigners. Americans, in turn, consisted of the right sort, and outsiders. By the same token, foreigners were either white or black, and with no intermediate shades. Bringing sex into the classification, all women were either good or bad. . . . No, he wasn't a prude; neither was he an ass. He was game enough to sum it up himself, when he told us: "God, I was young!"

On the morning he arrived in Cape Haiminga, he carried, in addition to the above convictions, an appointment to his first post in the Foreign Service, United States Consul to the Republic of Haiminga. This was his first visit in the tropics, and Cape Haiminga suffered by comparison with the posters that are found in the average travel-bureau.

True, a few palms were visible; but Old Town, which was near the wharves, specialized in tin roofs, which served as reflectors for the fiery sun, and the architecture was mostly of the gingerbread school. He also sniffed suspiciously as he detoured around the murky streams that flowed through the open gutters.

His first port of call was a store which, he had been told, was run by one Abe the Syrian. Abe, according to the man he was succeeding, would help him to get located. What with the heat, the strangeness of it all, and the varicolored people, who persisted in speaking their outlandish French patois instead of de-





"Walk on 'em," the American ordered.

cent English, Clayton was quite ready to accept aid from almost any source.

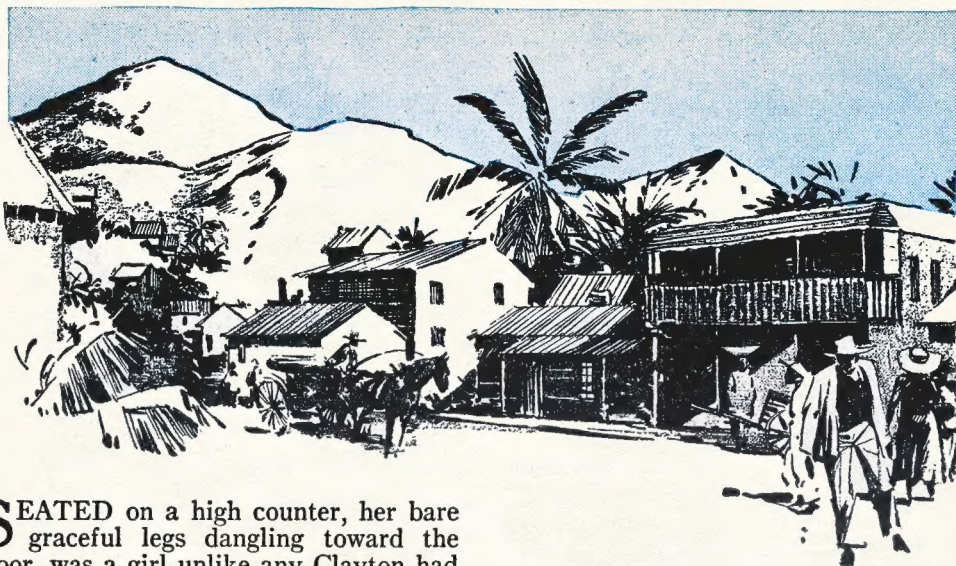
Help came from a big chocolate-hued gendarme, who took pity on Clayton. The gendarme spoke English. He had at one time fought against our Marines; and later, when realizing that it was for the best interests of his country, side by side with them, and with valor. But Clayton saw only a man whose color was wrong, and who was a comic-opera cross between a policeman and a soldier.

"Abe the Syrian?" the gendarme repeated. "But yes, monsieur." He pointed down the street. "You will see

his sign. It says, '*All goods salty and lousy.*'" The man chuckled. "Abe put up that sign to make the tourists laugh and enter his place." The shrug of his shoulders was typically French. "Alas, monsieur, in these times there are no tourists."

Clayton found the sign, and his annoyance increased because Abe had inserted an "e" in "*lousy*." He entered the shop, and paused gratefully in the comparative cool just inside the door. There, quite unobserved by the occupants of the inner room, he stood watching an interesting scene.





SEATED on a high counter, her bare graceful legs dangling toward the floor, was a girl unlike any Clayton had seen before. She was young, barely sixteen, with velvet-smooth skin the color of rich cream. Her short, simple dress—he guessed correctly that it was her only garment—served to accentuate budding curves. Her dark, sultry eyes were crowned by blue-black curly hair.

Kneeling before her, his back to the door, was a stout, swarthy man Clayton assumed to be Abe the Syrian. Off to one side stood a second man, obviously an American, who surveyed the proceedings with fond pride.

Abe turned, a wry smile upon his face, and a golden slipper in his hand.

"The little one has never inhabited shoes. Her feet are"—and he hesitated politely—"a little vast. Alas, monsieur, this is the only mated couple of dancing slippers in the shop." He reached for a box. "Other shoes, yes, and better for the little one's requisitions."

The American frowned with drunken dignity.

"That's bad. Don't like to buy things for people that are better for them. When I was a kid, I needed food and clothes, but my uncle bought me the bicycle I wanted. I thought he was a god. Marie wants golden slippers." He shrugged. "You wouldn't understand."

"Jenkins, white—" The plaintive appeal came from the girl. "I zink I put them on ze feet one other time. Maybee—"

Abe dropped to his knees, and after much pulling, pushing and puffing, managed to get her feet into the slippers, the sides of which were badly strained. Marie looked at them with triumph.

"Walk on 'em," the American ordered.

"Yes, Jenkins, white."

She slipped from the counter, grimaced with pain, and then smiled bravely as she took an experimental step or two.

"Hurt you?"

"A leetle," she admitted. "But I zink ze shoes, zey grow beeger, and ze feet, zey grow not so beeg."

"Like 'em?"

"Oh-oh! Jenkins, white, I loff them!"

The American chuckled quietly.

"Fashion," he murmured, "thy slave is woman, and by her thou art served from Fifth Avenue even to the bazaar of Abe the Syrian, in Cape Haiminga."

"Zey are mine?" the girl asked.

"They belong to the prettiest girl in Haiminga," he told her.

Abe the Syrian rubbed his hands with satisfaction.

"I package them up."

"No, no. I keep zem on ze feet." The merchant moved toward the cash drawer, and she said: "I loff you, Jenkins, white."

The American's manner was flippant, but his eyes were soft.

"If you could put that in writing, it might get me a room on the cool side of the house in the next place I am going to be stationed."

She gazed at him, her eyes alarmed.

"You go away, Jenkins, white?"

He slipped into reassuring patois:

"No. I speak words that have no sense. That is because I am happy. Your words have made my heart feel good."

MEANWHILE, Clayton had been busy doing some typing. It wasn't hard. He had read books, and gone to the movies. This girl was the native





Illustrated by  
Hamilton Greene

menace, usually introduced at the start of the second reel, or in chapter five. The stout chaps, the lads who had gone to the right schools, resisted her; but the weaklings, the men like this person she called Jenkins, white, went native.

Jenkins turned, and saw Clayton for the first time.

"As I live and breathe—and I do live and breathe, because dead men aren't thirsty—here is an American!" He took a step forward. "I am Jenkins. Richard Jenkins, to be exact. Amalgamated Fruit's only liability in Haiminga."

His keen eyes took in the disapproval stamped on Clayton's face.

"No, don't tell me who you are. Let me guess. I am quick like that." He pondered. "I have it. You are the new consul, come to take old Green's place." He waved a hand in modest protest. "It's very simple. You have all the cares of the Foreign Service on one shoulder, and the entire burden of the white race on the other. You really should hire a boy to carry them around for you."

The new consul drew himself up stiffly. "I am George Clayton."

Jenkins nodded his approval.

"Thirteen letters. That will fit very nicely on the bar chits they use here." He joined the girl in the doorway. "We'll meet again, Clayton. Can't help it.

Now that you are here, the American colony numbers two."

The bland voice of Abe the Syrian soothed Clayton's ruffled feelings:

"I am your very unobedient servant, M. Clayton. You keep cold. Everything will be misarranged. You will reuse M. Green's old office. I have a house for you with a lovely look. I will selection out for you servants that are trustingly. You are worse than lucky, M. Clayton. I bought M. Green's furniture. I sell you same, and price is same. No profit, no loss. You are greatly worse than lucky."

Ignoring the polite protests, Abe locked the door of the store, preparatory to giving his entire attention to the new arrival.

"No loss, however. The morning has ungorged one customer—and if another comes, it is better that he waits until the afternoon. That detains business less dissteady."

He led the way to a battered car.



"You exit into entrance to disconveyance, please."

**R**ICHARD JENKINS, the purchaser of the golden slippers, went home to find a tall, distinguished-looking black man waiting in the living-room.

"Again?" The American's face registered mock dismay.

"Yes," said the black man. "A fortnight has passed."

"Your visits are far more regular than your bills," Jenkins chuckled.

"I come as a physician, yes." The black man produced a stethoscope, and stood waiting for Jenkins to strip to the waist. "Also as a friend." His manner became professional as he applied the instrument over Jenkins' heart and listened intently. "So!"

"Just what does that mean, Dr. Mars? How long?"

"Your heart is like the works of a very old watch. It may stop at any minute. You have known that for a long time."

Jenkins walked to a table, filled two glasses, and handed one to the physician.

"Here is hoping they give me a room on the cool side of the house." There was affection in his smile. "Damn you, I'll miss you."

The dark physician sipped his drink slowly.

"You could postpone our parting if you would take less of this."

Jenkins shrugged.

"An extra week, a month or a year—what does that matter?"

"It might matter to others," the physician protested. "Isn't there somebody back in the United States?"

"We have gone over that before." A trace of annoyance appeared on the face of the American. "There is nobody, but Marie. She is to have everything."

"But is that wise?" the Haimingan asked.

"Why not?" countered the white man. "Father Renaud sent her to me. Her father, a white European, had been dead for years. Her mother, a Haimingan woman, had just died. I took her in. She was a scrawny kid, with big wistful eyes, and her head barely topped the table as she served my meals."

"Time has altered all that," the physician interposed.

Jenkins nodded as he continued:

"When Father Renaud was dying, he sent for me. He asked me if I had kept the promise I made when Marie entered my home. I told him that I had. Then

he said that he feared Marie was growing into a temptation I would find hard to resist, and that he released me from my promise. He had a wise, inscrutable smile when he said that it was possible I might keep the promise, despite his release and the provocation. He told me that in that case, he did not think that his prayers for me would be needed, and that he was content to die. He went that night."

There was a long pause.

"We all know your treatment of Marie," said Doctor Mars. "That is one of the reasons why we love you."

"But I was selfish," Jenkins protested. "I kept Marie here to prove to myself that I did have one small spot of decency left. I have proved it. Your people accept that proof." His smile was bitter. "But not mine. They can read only one meaning into a relationship between a drunken wastrel and a beautiful, unspoiled child. That's the world, Mars. You need money to fight it. I have provided for Marie."

The physician stood up.

"But the world will call to Marie," he said, "and she will go to it. She is a Haimingan." He hesitated. "I studied in Paris, and did post-graduate work in your country. Much of the time I was unhappy. Marie was not meant for sorrow." He shrugged. "But forgive me; perhaps you know best." He went toward the door. "*Au revoir*, my friend."

Jenkins sat with his head buried in his hands. Soon the door re-opened, and Marie entered.

"You are sick, Jenkins, white."

"No—Dr. Mars comes as a friend."

"No, no. I hear. You are sick. Soon you die." Her pent-up grief burst forth in spasmodic sobs. "I want no money. I want only to die with you. That is my happiness."

He stood beside her, his manner that of a father comforting a troubled child.

**G**EORGE CLAYTON found it comparatively easy to fit into the life Abe the Syrian had arranged for him. The house with the "lovely look" proved to be a tropical bungalow perched on the side of the mountain behind the town. Clayton's bed, shielded by mosquito-netting, was placed on the open porch, where he could look down on the hot streets and the harbor. Most of the time there was a cool mountain breeze.

The office, which was down in Old Town, was a trifle hot, but the work was



interesting. True, there was not much of it, but enough to keep him occupied. Clayton toiled faithfully on reports, which might or might not get read.

The Haimingan officials he came into contact with were polite and deferential, but he managed to keep their relations on an official basis. He maintained the same attitude toward the few foreigners, most of whom were definitely not the right sort, and quite a few of whom, as he told himself, were not white.

Soon, quite without his knowledge, his life was dominated by his Haimingan servants, who waited on him hand and foot, flattered him, and because they knew it would increase their hold on him, studied his weaknesses and catered to them. His favorite among them was Leon, his "boy," who happened to be a man of middle age.

**L** EON was valet, butler, chauffeur, social secretary, interpreter of language and customs and even more than that. Clayton didn't know it, but Leon had been a gift from Jenkins, who, despite their unfortunate first meeting, had been unwilling to see a fellow-American completely surrounded by servants who owed their first loyalty to Abe the Syrian.

All in all, it was a pleasant life, with only one disturbing element—Jenkins. To Clayton, the fruit-company man represented all that he despised. He saw Jenkins as little better than a beach-comber, a white man gone native. The fact that he was a fellow-countryman, and the only other American, was the cause for added bitterness.

Neither was there any escaping him. Clayton met him almost every noon in the place where he lunched, which the Chinese proprietor called "The Caribbean Stork Club." The consul had been in town less than a week when Jenkins approached his table.

"What do you do to amuse yourself after you have tucked all the cares of the United States of America away for the day?" he asked.

Clayton, retreating into his shell, remained silent. Outwardly Jenkins was amused, but inwardly he was furious.

"Thanks just the same, but I haven't time to sit down." A perverse whim prompted him to go through with what had been intended as a generous gesture. "Don't get me wrong. I wasn't prying into your love-life, if any. I own an airplane. It's an open-cockpit job, but not too bad. I keep it at my place in



the country, where there is rather a decent field. If you would care to come out with me some afternoon, we could take it upstairs and get ourselves some real air. The field isn't far from your place."

Clayton hesitated. There was something about this man that attracted him. Then the taboo he had created pushed that feeling aside.

"That's very kind of you," he said, "but I doubt if I will be able to find time to get away."

Jenkins was tight-lipped.

"I understand," he said. "Good afternoon, Mr. Clayton."

Outside the restaurant, Clayton found Leon sitting behind the wheel of the car.

"It very hot, monsieur. You no plenty long in Haiminga. Not work too hard. Better take ride in country—cool; good."

Clayton yielded to temptation. It was pleasant to drive slowly through the crowded streets, heading for the cool open country beyond. All about them flowed the colorful life of Haiminga. Naked children played in the streets. Now and then a barefooted peasant woman passed, balancing a heavy burden on her head. There were tiny donkeys, plodding forward with loads that seemed larger than the beasts that bore them.

A native girl, clad in imitation finery, walked toward the approaching car with a provocative gait. Her eyes flashed an invitation as the two men passed.

"Who is she?" Clayton asked.

"She business girl." Leon explained his meaning by a short and ugly word.

"Do you know Marie, Leon?"

"Yes, monsieur."



"Is she a business girl?"

"No! She no business girl! Jenkins, white, he plenty mad if she not good girl. She no make him mad."

Clayton leaned back, deep in thought. A vague, disquieting doubt was forming in his mind. Maybe Jenkins wasn't completely a rotter.

**H**IS next encounter with Jenkins took place several weeks later in front of the shack that served as a post office. This time Clayton made the first advance.

"Good morning, Mr. Jenkins."

Jenkins halted. For three days he had been trying to spur himself to the point where he would visit this man in his office. The salutation seemed friendly. Despite that, the memory of former rebuffs caused him to adopt a defensive banter.

"Good morning, Mr. Clayton. Would you like to buy a motorcycle?"

"Neither have I," Jenkins admitted. "Offhand, can you think of anybody in Haiminga who might want a motorcycle?"

"I cannot!"

"I didn't think you could," Jenkins declared. "But apparently Abe the Syrian can. Thirty of 'em arrived for him on last week's boat." He moved off down the street. "If you aren't too busy, Mr. Clayton, you might give that some thought."

Clayton entered the building, and obtained his mail. His next stop was at the shop of Abe the Syrian.

"I understand that you have a motorcycle for sale."

Abe raised both hands.

"Cyclomotors! Please don't conversational with me disregarding cyclomotors. Who would desiring cyclomotors that could go perhaps a few kilometers from town and then introduction sand that would dehorse him from the settee?"

A puff of smoke appeared in the sky, dangerously close to the plane—which faltered, then straightened out, Puerto Rico bound.



Clayton drew back. The man was impossible. That was a crack at his refusal to fly. The fool thought he was afraid.

"I have no use for a motorcycle," he said icily.





The Syrian fished in a desk drawer, and produced the copy of a letter.

"I inform them that it is radio sets. They transgress me cyclemotors. Same do me as much goodness as fur coats." He eyed the consul speculatively. "Who inform you? M. Jenkins?"

"Yes," Clayton admitted.

Abe's huge stomach quivered.

"He greatness fellow. Eternity cracking jokes. Maybe some day I dequire laugh in him."

THE tradewinds failed that night. Clayton tossed about in bed restlessly. For the first time the drums booming faintly in the near-by hills annoyed him. He slipped into fitful sleep, only to awaken with the dim knowledge that something was amiss. He groped for the flashlight under his pillow. Its rays revealed a mosquito perched on the inside of the netting. His first slap killed the pest. A drop of blood stained the bed linen.

Then Leon was bending over him, taking in the situation at a glance. "That bad, monsieur. Night mosquito he bring cold-fever." His face clouded as he discovered a newly torn hole in the netting. "That no there when you go to bed." He shuffled away, and returned with a glass.

"Drink this, monsieur."

Clayton sipped the cold, bitter drink. Then he dropped off into troubled sleep.

The following morning found Clayton apparently none the worse for his experience. He drove to the office, and with his customary zest tackled the work he found there. All that week he avoided Jenkins. The next Wednesday, however, he found his fellow-American waiting at his office when he returned from lunch.

"Ever try any fishing?" asked the fruit-company man.

Clayton contented himself with a short, "No!"

Jenkins remained unruffled.

"Neither have I. But your friend Abe can tell you all about it. He has gone in for fishing in a big way." Jenkins turned to leave. "It shouldn't interfere with your work, because Abe does his fishing at night. Good afternoon, Mr. Clayton."

That night Clayton tossed and fretted. Damn Jenkins! Damn Abe! Damn those black apes drumming away up there in the hills! Yes, damn the whole country! It was no place for a white man.

He woke to find himself drenched with perspiration. His head ached as if it would split. The pains shot down into his back and arms. His tongue was dry and thick, and there was a foul taste in his mouth. The palm-fronds remained motionless in the hot night air, but he was cold, terribly cold.

"Le-on!" The cry emerged from between chattering teeth. His entire body and the bed were shaking when the black appeared.

"Cold-fever, monsieur," Leon murmured. "I bring good doctor."

The chill ended, and Clayton became hot. He thought he felt his mother's cool touch on his wrist, and looked up to find a dark man taking his pulse with one hand, while in the other he held a fever thermometer.

"Good morning, Mr. Clayton. I am Dr. Mars."

Clayton struggled back to reality.

"Malaria," said the dark man. "But don't worry." He swabbed Clayton's arm with a bit of cotton. "A ship has been sighted, and I must get back to town. I am quarantine officer." A needle bit into Clayton's flesh. "This will keep you comfortable until I can return."

Clayton essayed desperately to speak.

"If the ship has a doctor, get him to—" he mumbled.

The dark man dissolved, and Clayton's mother seemed to return.

IN the harbor was a large freighter, flying the flag of Panama. A launch put the Haimingan port authorities along-



side her. They climbed the rope ladder, laughing and joking. The harbor pilot went to the bridge. He never left it—alive. The others entered the captain's cabin. There they died.

The ship nosed her way to the long pier and tied up. Scores of men, apparently seamen, made their way ashore. They went to the shop of Abe the Syrian. There they slung machine-guns over their shoulders, mounted the motorcycles that were waiting for them, and with maps spread out before them, rode away to their appointed tasks.

The tiny radio-station, the cable and telegraph office, the telephone exchange, the tanks of the oil company, and the unprotected arsenal of the gendarmes were seized almost at the same moment.

Other motorcycles carried riders along the main roads to the end of the pavement, where they set up machine-gun nests, from which they halted all traffic to and from the town.

Soon the alarm was out, and scattered groups of gendarmes threw themselves upon the invaders. This only served to prove that black men were not afraid to die. Here and there a householder did a bit of sniping. For the most part, however, the Haimingans stood silently along the streets, gazing with sad unbelieving eyes at what was happening.

Down in the harbor, the false superstructure of the freighter was knocked aside, and the muzzles of big guns were swung around until they pointed directly at the town. More men—they openly flaunted the steel helmets and machine-guns of shock troops—streamed down her gangplanks.

Leon, squatting on the floor beside the bed of his white, idly watched the freighter dock. The rasping cough of a machine-gun carried up to the hills.

"Oh-oh!"

Drums, speaking a language all their own, began to spread the alarm to the hills and the open country beyond. Now and again a drum ceased abruptly as a bullet found the body of the drummer. Then the story was picked up at some other point, and again sent out upon the air.

Leon, mouth open and eyes wide, listened to the drums. He was torn between the desire to flee to the hills and his duty to his white. The latter triumphed. He bent over Clayton, and shook him.

"Monsieur! Monsieur! Awaken! Plenty trouble!"

Clayton muttered angrily. This wasn't Kay, his kid sister. Neither was it Jenkins, or Marie, who also had appeared in his delirium, and who, strange to say, seemed to be on the best of terms with his mother and Kay. But only Leon, the black boy, was on the porch.

"Plenty trouble, monsieur!"

The second word registered. Sure there was trouble. He was sick, and at the mercy of a native doctor.

"Fight!" Leon continued, and a particularly loud burst of machine-gun fire served to give emphasis to his assertion.

Clayton tried to raise his head.

"Revolution?"

"No, no, monsieur. Bad men from Europe. They come in ship. They fight Haiminga."

Clayton's cracked lips tried to frame a smile. This was all a dream, like his mother and Kay. But there stood Leon, and Leon was real. Best play it safe.

"Help me get up. I must go to the radio-station."

A thousand devils were hammering at his head, but he staggered to his feet. Leon's hold slipped, and he fell to the floor. Leon tried unsuccessfully to lift him, and then propped him against the wall.

"Drink!" the white man gasped.

Leon produced a square bottle. The raw gin caused Clayton to cough, but his mind began to clear.

"Where's Jenkins?"

"I no know, monsieur."

"Get him."

Terror was stamped on Leon's face.

"No, no, monsieur. I no go. I plenty scared. I stay with—"

HIS protests ceased abruptly as they heard the sound of running feet.

"Leon!" a girl's voice cried. Marie, panting and disheveled, and with one precious golden slipper clasped in each hand, darted around the corner of the porch. "I come from Jenkins, white," she gasped. "He has ze airplane. Your white must come wiz me. Jenkins, white, will take heem away."

Leon spoke in the patois:

"My white cannot go. He is too sick. He wants Jenkins, white, to come here."

Marie addressed Clayton:

"No, no. Zere is no time. Jenkins, white, must go queek to Puerto Rico. Zis is more worse zan you theenk. Ze othaire sheep comes with ze airplanes. Zey fly to Panama and drop the boombs."



But zat is only to fool, so ze Americains bring all zare sheeps to thees ocean. Zey have many sheeps in ze south of ze othaire ocean. Ze truly boomb Panama zere, when ze Americains have no sheeps."

Clayton's mind was clearer, but the old prejudice returned and clouded reason with suspicion.

"How do you know all this?"

She made a gesture of impatience.

"I walk down ze street. Zey theenk I am ze business girl. Zeir head man tell Haiminga man to tell me that he beesy now, but zat he zee me tonight. I say, yes, and he put ze arm over me. Ugh! But I stay zere, and he talk. I hear. Zen I go to Jenkins, white. We go to ze airplane. Zen I come here."

"How could you understand them?" Clayton demanded.

"My papa come from zeir countree." There was a trace of anger in her voice. "Many, many times I hear heem speak. But hurree. Soon zey come here. Soon zey find Jenkins, white, and ze airplane."

Clayton's suspicions vanished.

"Bring my pen and paper," he ordered Leon, who obeyed at once. "Here, hold me up."

His head was an anvil, his hands leaden, as he lay sprawled on the floor, with only Leon's arms to support him as he wrote slowly and painfully. He worked mechanically, with no thought of himself, and fighting to keep his mind clear as he used terse sentences to record what he knew, and what the girl had told him. When he was finished, he fell back exhausted, but the sting of raw gin again revived him.

"Take it," he ordered the girl. He fought for breath. "Tell Jenkins—give it to military authorities—Puerto Rico." A fog threatened to envelop him, but he used all his will-power and pushed it back. "Understand?"

"*Oui!*" There was impatience in the girl's voice. "Hurree!" She placed the golden slippers on a table, took the paper from his waxen hands, folded it, and started to thrust it down the neck of her dress.

"No, no!" The cry came from Leon. "She pretty girl. Maybe she meet bad man. Maybe he grab her."

The black man picked up one of the golden slippers. Marie called out in protest. He ignored her as he pulled a knife from his pocket and went to work.

One deft slash cut loose the piece of cloth that covered the inside of the high



French heel. He folded it back, and attacked the wood of the heel, gouging out a tiny compartment.

"Hurree!" Marie urged him. "Zey hunt Jenkins, white, to kill heem; but he wait for your white."

Leon took the paper from her, folded it into a more compact mass, crowded it into the opening in the heel, and pushed the strip of cloth back into place. That done, he stood looking doubtfully at his handiwork.

Clayton roused himself.

"Glue. On my desk. Hurry!"

Leon entered the house. When he returned, he gave the slipper to Marie, who had put on its mate. She placed her hand on Leon's shoulder, balanced herself upon one leg the color of rich cream, and crowded her foot into the shoe with the hollow heel. Then the golden slippers went flashing down the flower-bordered lane.

Clayton sagged back against the wall. His job was done. His own fate worried him not at all. He had only one regret: the cursed malaria had forced him to place the safety of his country in the hands of a beachcomber and a girl who was not white.

Then Clayton's mother reappeared. She took Jenkins' hand in both her own. She also bent over and kissed Marie.

It was some time later when an excited "*Oh-oh!*" from Leon, and the labored roar of an airplane motor brought him back to consciousness. The plane, which was only a short distance from the porch, was gaining altitude slowly in the hot, dead air. Jenkins, unable to clear the hills, was forced to fly over the harbor, which offered the



only opening by which he could reach the sea.

On the decks of the freighter, tiny dots were darting about. The barrels of guns, large and small, were being trained aloft. Each bark of those guns evoked an agonized echo of "*Oh-oh!*" from Leon.

Clayton, sprawled on the floor, repeated an almost forgotten prayer. A puff of white smoke appeared in the sky, dangerously close to the plane—which faltered in flight then straightened out. Swift and true, it winged its way above the blue waters, Puerto Rico bound.

LEUTENANT JOSEPH FORTWIN, flying a single-seater scouting plane, was on his way back from a routine patrol off Puerto Rico when he sighted a wavering dot in the sky, and immediately changed his course to intercept it. He also picked up a bit of altitude on the way, and fired an experimental burst from his forward machine-gun; one must not be caught unprepared in these troubled times.

A sharp split turn swung him directly around, and some distance above an open-cockpit job that was being flown by a man who was giving the goofiest exhibition of flying the service pilot had ever witnessed. His ship would fall out of control, regain an even keel, and then fly forward. This happened not once, but a dozen times. Lieutenant Fortwin nosed down for a closer look.

There was a passenger in the front cockpit, but Martin concentrated on the pilot, who slouched over the controls, gazed straight ahead, and paid no attention to the ship directly above him. By this time both planes were approaching land, and nearing territory that was forbidden to private pilots. Fortwin pulled off a bit to the right, and dropped almost to the same level as the other ship.

The head of the pilot of the open-cockpit job fell forward. His ship nosed down. Fortwin, ever on the alert, pulled his plane up sharply, and to the right. He saw the other pilot's head straighten. His plane came back to an even keel. Martin closed in again. There were holes in the fuselage, and in the wing-fabric of the other ship. Fortwin's eyes widened, and he pulled closer. Now he could see that the other pilot had one hand clasped to his breast. His white shirt bore a huge dark stain. Blood! Fortwin wondered how one man could lose that much of it and live. He had nerve, that pilot!

THE passenger in the front cockpit was standing, facing aft, her long dark hair billowed out in the wind. A girl! She was looking at Fortwin, but her pilot still stared doggedly ahead.

Fortwin pulled away a trifle, glanced down, estimated the distance to the nearest landing-field, and growled to himself as he pulled back to the side of the other plane. The sun flashed on a buckle of the harness the girl was wearing. Fortwin looked at the ground again, and saw they were nearing a wide beach. He waved to attract the attention of the girl, touched his own parachute-harness, pointed at hers, and went through the motions of jumping.

The girl shook her head. He was close enough to see her lips framing the word, "*No!*" She pointed at herself, at her pilot, and held up two crossed fingers. She would stick with her pilot. And the glorious little fool was smiling!

Fortwin pulled in, getting just as close as he dared, to a ship that was flying steadily at the moment, but might veer off erratically at any time. He felt an insane desire to leap to the aid of the stricken pilot. He fought it back, because he knew it would be suicide.

The girl bent over, straightened, and waved something in Fortwin's direction.

A golden slipper!

The girl pointed to the slipper, and then at Fortwin. She wanted him to have it. He shook his head in bewilderment.

The girl went through the mechanics of writing. She folded an invisible piece of paper, and pretended to place it in the heel of the slipper.

Fortwin signaled understanding: there was a message in the slipper; she wanted it to get to him. The kid was clever, but it was wasted effort. Her stricken pilot was doing a fairly good mechanical job of holding the controls steady, but he obviously had no idea where he was, and he never would be able to make a landing. Fortwin was risking death every minute he flew beside him.

The girl's arm drew back, and before Fortwin could halt her with a signal, she tossed the slipper at him. He swore softly as he saw the expected happen. The slipper was caught in the slipstream, sucked back through the tail-group, and only then did it begin its downward flight. Fortwin leaned from the cockpit, searching for landmarks. They crossed above a green-carpeted golf-course near his own station.



The service pilot turned, intending to reassure the girl. Her pilot fell forward. The ship nosed down. Fortwin pulled away just in time. The wounded pilot remained limp and motionless, his body held in place by the safety-strap. A wing flashed up, and turned over in a lazy circle as his ship went into a flat spin.

Fortwin, white of face, followed it down, pulling his ship through tight spirals. Beneath him were the streets of a native town. The spinning plane hurtled down to meet those streets; from them there arose a cloud of smoke, and angry tongues of flame.

Fortwin leveled off. A savage kick on the rudder bar headed his ship for the golf-course.

He nosed down, fish-tailed to lose flying speed, made an emergency landing, taxied the ship near a group of men gathered about a putting green, and leaped from the cockpit.

A native caddy, who had made the find, clutched the golden slipper, which had suffered badly from the fall. The cloth of gold had been split and stained. The toes were pathetically flat. The heel, which had been broken open, hung to the sole by only one nail.

"Give me that," Fortwin ordered. The caddy handed it over. The pilot's fingers explored the opening in the dangling heel. It was empty.

Fortwin pushed his way through the crowd, and confronted a stout, elderly tourist in plus-fours, who was bending over a piece of paper that was soiled and torn.

"Extraordinary!" murmured the tourist. "Why, God bless my soul!"

"I'll take that," said Fortwin.

The note of authority in his voice impressed the tourist, who gave him the paper. Fortwin smoothed it out, and began to read the cramped, labored writing. "Open up!" the pilot barked. The men drew to one side as he rushed past them. He broke into a run. As he ran, he thrust the golden slipper into the pocket of his coveralls. The battered heel fell to the ground. Despite the desperate need for haste, Fortwin stopped to recover it.

AT this point, Lieutenant Davenport clapped his hands, and a Panamanian boy shuffled in to refill our glasses.

"This will be dry stuff," Davenport warned us, "but you need it to fill out the picture."

He lit a cigarette before he continued:

"I was a very junior ensign on the *Delaware*. She happened to be the flagship of the Atlantic fleet, so I could watch the best minds function.

"Our planes went out looking for the airplane-carrier that Marie's message told about. They found her, miles off the shipping lanes, her escort a heavy cruiser and two destroyers. The planes gave us the position, and then kept themselves amused by making the flight-deck of that carrier so hot that not a plane could get in the air. The destroyers tried to put a smoke-screen around her, and then our planes concentrated on sinking the destroyers. In between times, they tried out their new bombing-sights on the cruiser.

"By the time we came up, our only dish was two cripples, who couldn't even make a run for it. We did get in one blast from our forward turret, but our heart wasn't in the work, and we were glad when they decided to call it a day.

"WE turned the leavings over to the British Caribbean fleet, and told them to mark it up on their score-card. You see, we were in no position to go the whole way—then. The Blitzkriegers were willing to let it ride like that, because major jobs that go sour don't help the prestige of a dictator. That's why you wise lads of the press didn't get in on the real story.

"To the north of us, one of our destroyers took on the freighter, and her crew upheld national tradition by doing a nice job of scuttling. A cruiser,—I think it was the *Kansas City*,—put out a landing-party. The Haimingans, who had been massing in the hills, streamed down to join our lads, and for a few hours all game-laws were suspended.

"You missed this part of the party because Haiminga lends itself very nicely to censorship. What's that? Yes, they found Clayton. He was so sick the visiting firemen hadn't bothered to kill him. Some good navy sawbones went to work on him, and here he sits, now our State Department's leading authority on Caribbean countries, and our most popular diplomat in the whole blooming section.

"But to get on with the story:

"All the while, we were shoving everything we had in the south Caribbean through the Panama Canal. They made contact with the Pacific fleet, and as per their instructions, headed south. There they found our Oriental friends, bowling along as merrily as James River steam-



ers carrying a Confederate Daughters' picnic.

"The little yellow men did some quick thinking. Seeing our battle-wagons in the Pacific convinced them that Adolf, Josie and the other girls had been detained somewhere, perhaps in a beauty parlor. There was no point in keeping a date when they knew they were going to be stood up, but they still had a fine job of face-saving on their hands. They tried it by radioing our fleet that they were on a 'good-will cruise.' The Old Man didn't keep them waiting for an answer. He told them that he was going to scatter enough good-will from his sixteen-inch guns to take care of that part of the Pacific. He advised them to head due west, *pronto*, before some of that good-will bounced back on them. They seemed to think that was sound advice, because they changed course at once, and didn't utter even a single squawk when some of our scouting units followed them, just in case."

WE waited while Davenford devoted himself to his neglected glass.

"There isn't any more," he concluded. "You chaps will have to write your own ending."

"That's easy," said Carmody. "Marie gave us one of her magic slippers, and it kept the wolves of Europe and Asia out of the Americas. By comparison, it would have been a simple job for the other magic slipper to have carried Marie and her Jenkins, white, from that crack-up to a place above race, color, hate and war." He chuckled. "One dollar gets you ten that Father Renaud was there to meet them."

"Of course he was," said Bruce. "He talked to Jenkins like a Dutch uncle, and told him to stop treating Marie like a kid."

"I'll carry it along a little further," said Healey. "Father Renaud got out his book, and read the right words, and made the right signs. Marie and Jenkins, white, gave the right answers. After that, Father Renaud led them to a room on the cool side of the house." Healey glanced about complacently. "That's how every good story should end."

"But we forgot one thing," said Clayton. "On your feet, gentlemen! Here's to little Marie, and her magic golden slippers."

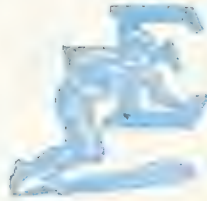
We all drank to that. Max Billgray came on the run when we broke the glasses.

# Unlike Leonardo

*An able writer new to these pages gives us a cheerful tale of youth and football.*

By

HOWARD RIGSBY



VEN though certain features of structure were distinctly feminine, she was built like a prep-school quarterback—which, in Bonus Reed's language, meant that the new

girl would not, traveling in a forward direction, resist much wind. She was carrying the ball for the Kappas through a broken field of dancers when Bonus tackled her.

He'd heard she had a big head, sharp tongue and the makings of a grind, but he didn't believe it. Still, there wasn't any coyness in her dark eyes as she leaned back in his arms and looked him over.

"I know you," she remarked. "You're Bonus. I'm flattered, Bonus."

"You're that pretty little Yankee," he said. "I been watching you. Now hold tight. We're going to do some real dancing."

"Yankee!" she said. "Just because I hang onto my g's and can't flutter my lashes? I'm no carpet-bagger. My mother went to this college, Bonus."

"Just keep your mind on your feet, honey." He whirled her.

She gasped. "Keep your mind on your own feet. Muscle-bound!"

"Relax," he whispered. "You mustn't talk to the boys like that."

She was silent a moment. "Oh, you sweet old Bonus thing!" she said. "Ah just loves it when you step on my little toes with your great big feet!"





"Don't you ever give up, Bonus?" she asked.

"That's no way to talk," he said. "You're much too beautiful to talk that way."

"Too beautiful to have a mind—huh, Bonus? Sort of upsets you to find a girl not all putty and sugar in your strong arms. Never had any spice—huh, Bonus?"

"I'm in training," Bonus said.

Marshall Thurston cut in. Bonus knew just by the way she let go of him that she liked Marsh. She smiled. "Try a little light exercise above the ears sometime, Bonus."

He went out and sat down on a couch in the Kappas' library. He wiped his forehead.

"You get some of that Laura girl in your hair?" Mike Saunders asked him. Mike roomed with him at the Beta house up the street.

"She's a regular little old wasp," Bonus complained. "What makes a girl like that? Why's she have to go and be so come-get-me lookin' with that stay-away tongue?"

"She don't like the football boys," Mike said. "She told me that. I said: 'Sweetheart, we had a conference champion team right up till you hurried down here to tell us that. You sure have

spoiled a Sugar Bowl invite for Robertson.'"

Bonus opened his mouth wide, showing strong white teeth. He slapped his knee. "What she say to that?"

Mike scratched an ear. "I don't know for sure, Bonus, that I got it right. There may of been something else in there, but she had me so groggy for a minute I didn't get it all. It was something about how it was hard to believe sometimes that apes like us belonged to the same species as Leonard—whoever he is. And she named some other fellows too."

"Leonard—" Bonus mused. "So there is a guy that suits her."

"Probably some grind up there in the Ivy League," Mike said. "Yale or one of those places."

Bonus did not hear him; he was thinking. Mike wandered away, for when Bonus thought, all other operations stopped.

The orchestra was playing the signing-off number as Bonus cut in on her again. She was dancing with Marsh. Looked like she got on all right with Marsh, who was smart as they came.

"Here we go again," she said when Bonus took her. "Flies like vinegār too—huh, Bonus?"



"This Leonard—" Bonus said at once. "Have you got a picture of him? I'd sure like to know what a real man looks like."

She leaned back to stare up at him. "Are you certain you're with the right girl, Bonus? I don't know any Leonards. I haven't any pictures of any Leonards."

"Ah—" Bonus said. "What did you tell Mike? Said apes like us didn't belong in the same league with your Leonard. Why would Mike want to go and tell me that if you didn't say it?"

"Leonard!" She pressed her forehead suddenly against his breast pocket. He knew she was laughing at him, but it was worth it. "Oh, you mean *that* Leonard!"

"What's he got?" Bonus asked.

"Well," she said, "I guess I was thinking of his mind when I mentioned him to your friend Mike. But Leonard's got everything, Bonus. He's the greatest man that ever lived. There's nothing Leonard couldn't do. He was an engineer, an artist. He could paint a picture, or build an airplane."

"You're pretty sweet on that boy."

"Our minds have met," Laura admitted.

"That must have really been something," Bonus said. "But down this way we wouldn't call that love."

"Not only that," she said. "Leonard's a gentleman, as well as an architect, sculptor and physicist."

"I've had three years of physics," Bonus said. "But no girl ever loved me because of that."

"You're just a football-player," Laura said. "If you were really interested in engineering, like Leonard, you would have gone over to Green Point, where all the good ones go."

"How do you know so much about it?"

"My father went there."

"Well," Bonus said, "they offered me more here. How's your Leonard at carrying the ball?"

"I told you Leonard was a gentleman, Bonus. If he played a game, he'd play it for fun."

THE music stopped, and Bonus dropped his arms. His smile had become terrifyingly polite. He said: "You know, I think it's real lucky for you and everybody else that you're sweet on a boy who's been dead four hundred years."

"Oh, you're angry!" she said. "But how smart of you to know about Leon-

ard. And just what do you mean by that crack?"

"Maybe I don't belong to the same species as Leonardo Da Vinci," Bonus said. "But I'm going to build good strong bridges for somebody some day. And when I like a girl, I don't care if she knows any good logarithms. And nobody ever did tell me I wasn't a gentleman just because I always needed money bad."

Marsh came over with Laura's coat. He looked at Bonus' big shoulders, going away. "What's wrong?" he asked her. "You give old Bonus more than he could take?"

"I don't know," Laura said. She didn't sound quite so sharp and confident. "You all insult so easy down here."

BONUS lay on the rubbing-table while Frank, using the edges of his big hands, went pounding up and down his spine. With the liniment odor eddying toward his nose, Bonus shut his eyes and let all the tension out of the sore muscles in his back. He did most of his heavy thinking on the rubbing-table.

This thing that kept chasing around in his head, bothering him, was something he had never really considered before. Were there actually people who wouldn't consider him a gentleman just because he made expenses playing football? It wasn't as if he'd got rich at it. Board and clothes and books, construction-jobs in the summer. A man could put himself through college by waiting on table and still be a gentleman. Marsh was considered a gentleman, and no one knew just how much he pulled down as senior athletic manager.

As if he didn't play the game for fun! She think he got out there on Saturdays and ran around till he couldn't stand up just because it meant expenses?

"Relax," he heard Frank say.

"*Latissimus dorsi*." That was Doc's voice. "Use your head 'stead of your back all the time, Bonus. You can't carry that whole second-string line up and down the field. They're big boys."

"Easier to rub your back," Bonus mumbled. "Strain your brain, Doc, they just put you away."

Frank said: "You take a look at that line, Doc. This boy don't open up those holes just with his back. Bonus uses everything."

"I've taped enough of them," Doc admitted.

Bonus rolled over and opened his eyes. "How'd you get through school, Doc?"



"I memorized a little Latin, some valences, peered into a few cadavers—"

"Who put up the money?"

Doc laughed. "I borrowed from everybody I knew—and some I didn't know. Why?"

"Anybody ever say you weren't a gentleman, Doc?"

"Not to my face, Bonus."

"You can't hit a woman," Bonus said.

Doc stared at him for a moment, and then thoughtfully said, "Oh." It never took Doc long to figure out a thing; and, it so happened, he and his wife had chaperoned the last Kappa dance.

Doc must have guessed how it was the next Saturday. He sat on the bench with his little black bag in his lap and concentrated on the line. But no one else, in the stands or on the bench, knew how it was. All they ever knew was that Bonus almost tossed what should have been an easy game for Robertson.

The team had freedom until midnight on Saturdays, and as there were no dances that week-end, the juke-joints got the trade. Ely's filled up early, until you couldn't get a booth, until the nickel machine, even, was dated an hour ahead. What had happened to Bonus that afternoon? That's what everybody wanted to know; but when old Bonus showed up at Ely's in person, alone, they set down their beers, and they paused in their switching on the floor, and yelled at him as if he had played that afternoon the way he always had—making the opposing linemen wish they had taken up lacrosse instead.

Bonus looked around until he saw Marsh and the graduate student from the North (that the Kappa house just couldn't help, 'cause she had belonged up there and was, after all, a sister). Bonus went over to their booth.

"Slaphappy," Laura said gently, "you sure didn't earn your pay out there today."

Bonus knew then, way down to his aching arches, what it was—what it was that made him come asking for it. He looked at Marsh, wishing Marsh would go away, so he wouldn't have to sit there and take it in front of him. "I wasn't thinkin' of the pay," he said. "Pay-day's not till the first."

"Forget it," Marsh said. "You can't be a hero every Saturday."

He was going to have to take it from Marsh too.

"You tackled so apologetically," Laura said. "And when you went up to the



LEONARDO DA VINCI

referee and told him you'd really touched that punt when no one thought you had—"

"You want me to lie about it?" Bonus asked.

"He wasn't leader of Troop Seven for nothing," Marsh said.

"That's what it reminded me of—a boy scout running around the field doing a good deed on every play. I loved the way you picked that great big end up and dusted him off—after you had accidentally tackled him."

Bonus stared at Marsh, then looked at her. "Would you dance? I swear it won't hurt your amateur standing."

"I don't mind," Marsh said promptly. "If Miss Thompson doesn't."

"I was going to ask you," Bonus said.

"Anything for the team." Laura rose.

"HOW'S old Leonard?" Bonus asked her, after a step or two.

"Leonard's just fine. You know, Bonus, I found a book in the library yesterday—just happened to be glancing around. He's awfully handsome, even if it isn't authentic."

"I'd like to see that picture," Bonus said.

"Well, I've got the book, Bonus."

"Tomorrow afternoon?" Bonus asked quickly.

They couldn't do much dancing, but they moved around. After a minute she said: "All right, Bonus." And after an-





"So you're sweet on a boy who's been dead four hundred years!"

other minute she said: "Why are you so interested in Leonard, Bonus?"

"You like him," Bonus said. "Maybe I might learn something. What would Leonard do if he was in my shoes, I wonder?"

"Keep them off mine, Bonus. I told you—Leonard was a gentleman. You mean you want me to like you?"

"That's what I mean," Bonus said. "Things have changed. Maybe Leonard wouldn't do any different than I do."

"Leonard wouldn't! Why—remember how he studied the flight of birds—figured out the same principles of aerodynamics that engineers are just getting around to now? Leonard would have figured out a new way to play football, too. He would have observed and pondered, and then he would have invented something so good that they would have had to change the rules to stop him. And as for women—"

"What'd Leonard figure out there?"

"I'd like to know."

"So would I," Bonus said. "I don't know anything about them everybody

else doesn't already know. If they like me, they just do; and if they don't like me, they just don't like me. This is the first time I ever did try to do anything about it."

They moved around some more. "Why try?"

"I don't know." He looked down at the top of her head, and then over at Marsh, who was matching quarters with the waitress. "Why don't you like me? Just because I get paid?"

"Do I have to have a reason, Bonus? All right." She wasn't talking loud, so he had to bend down to hear. "You're just a jellybean," she was saying. "Got in college because you could play football. You represent the male at his lowest common denominator. That's all, Bonus. You're just a warm lazy night; and some night some girl will marry you. She'll wake up five years later to find herself living, in much less than style, with a two-hundred-pound child who's good for nothing but yarning at the corner bar, who sells a little paint or breakfast food, or something, just because some people remember that ninety-yard run he made against Green Point that time back in 'forty—or was it 'thirty-nine?"

"Those things are all right," Bonus said. "But I'm an engineer. You mean you really want a little hundred-and-twenty-pound Leonard? That's it, I guess."

"I want something more than two hundred pounds with an overwhelming pre-



ponderance of male chromosomes, Bonus."

"You got to be careful," Bonus said. "A preponderance is better than none at all, I hear. And—just for the record—it's one eighty-seven."

"Wait five years." She put one hand against his chest and pushed him away a little and then stared up at him intently. "And," she said, "as long as my hair's streaming down my back already—listen, Bonus: I'm made just like these other girls!"

"No!" Bonus grinned. "How you talk, honey!"

"Don't call me 'honey,' either! Only, I'm different. I'm fighting what they don't even bother to fight."

"Yourself," Bonus said softly.

"I want to be a little bit intelligent! Live that way. Oh, what the hell's the use talking to you? A hired football-player. A performing ape in satin pants—and not a very good one!"

Bonus let go of her, and they faced each other on the crowded patch of floor, glaring. "But a gentleman!" he yelled at her. "You hear me? A gentle—" He stopped abruptly, gulped, looked at the people and walked out.

**S**UNDAY, Bonus hung around the Beta house in his pajamas, trying to study, but his eyes would wander from the page, and he'd think how beautiful and intelligent she looked even when she was furious. It was just that she had a straight-A mind while he was lucky to get C's. He ought to remember that and never go back for more; yet along in the afternoon he found himself shaving his big tough face, being very careful about it, too.

Marsh was playing the piano at the Kappa house, and there were forms sprawled on chairs and sofas.

"She's upstairs," Millie said, when he asked for Laura. "Got her nose in a big book. Marsh asked for her too, an' I went all the way up there to carry her the news, an' she yelled at me, 'So an' so it to hell, I don't feel sociable. I don't want to see anybody!'" That girl talks just awful, Bonus. Imagine anyone not feelin' sociable on a grand Sunday afternoon."

Bonus looked at Millie, who was sociable any time, who did not bother to fight things. Millie was small and blonde. She had a tiny sulky-looking mouth and trusting eyes. Why couldn't it be Millie?

"You can't blame her for not wanting to see Marsh," he said. "I got business with that girl, Millie. She's going to lend me a book."

"A book?" Millie gasped. "Bonus, what's wrong with you?"

"You be sweet and tell her," Bonus said.

"No," Millie said. "I wouldn't go up there to be cussed at by her for anything in this world. If you got business with Laura Thompson, you can go tell her about it yourself. The house-mother's not here. Go up the stairs, and it's the very first door on your right."

"I can't go up there!" Bonus said.

"Well, there's nobody here going for you."

Bonus went to the stairs and started slowly up them.

"She'll cuss you," Millie called.

The first door on the right. He knocked gently. "Come in," Laura said.

He took a deep breath. He just wanted to say that it was Bonus, but that would sound funny. He opened the door. Laura was lying on her stomach on a couch, reading. She had on striped pajamas. She flung her hair back and glanced his way, then froze.

"What are you doing up here?"

"I just wanted to tell you that I'm—"

"I know—a gentleman. But what are you doing up here?"

"I was going to say I was sorry about last night. And about the book. . . . They said you'd cuss me. Go right ahead."

"I'm beyond it," Laura said. "Don't you ever give up, Bonus?"

"Not when I want anything real bad."

She closed the book she had been reading, got up and came toward him. "Here's the book." She opened it. "And this is Leonard."

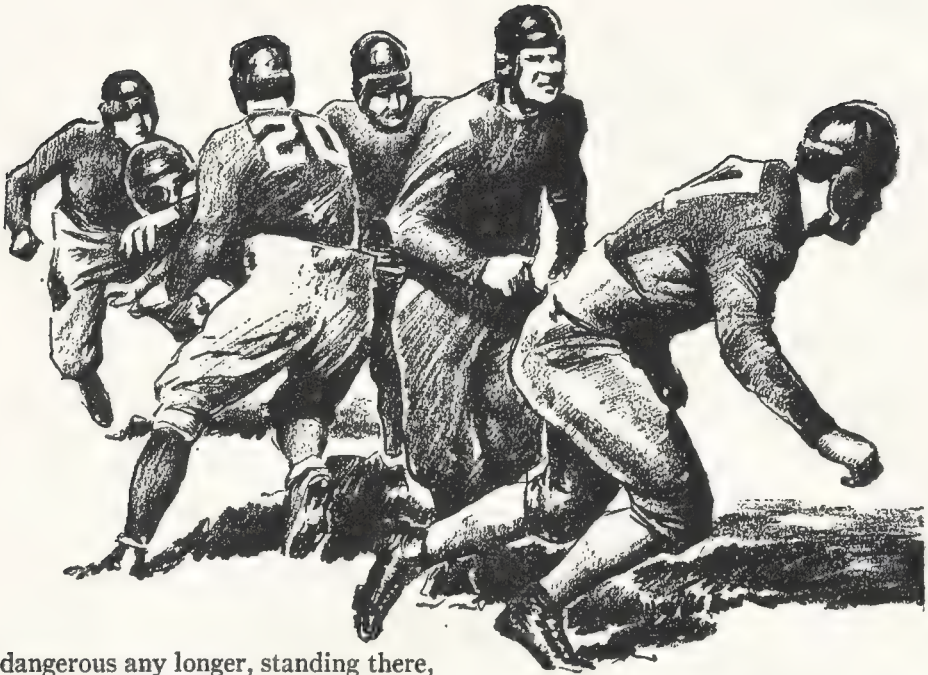
"So that's him," Bonus said. "He's pretty old, isn't he?"

"Look at that brow, Bonus." She glanced up at Bonus' brow, which was of a lower variety. "Look at the sensitiveness and intelligence in that wonderful face." She looked up at him again. "Well—why don't you look? Bonus—what are you going to do? Bonus!"

**A**FTER she stopped trying to beat him with the book, he took it away and put it under his arm. After he had kissed her, she bit him on the hand, and he set her down gently.

She was furious again, but it was not quite the same. It was hard to consider





her dangerous any longer, standing there, minute and unsubstantial in her bare feet, with the pajamas billowing around her. Her eyes wavered in their fury. She was breathing hard, and her mouth looked as if she might cry. Bonus realized suddenly that he had done a terrible thing.

"Cuss me," he begged. "I'm sure all you said I was."

Laura went over and flung herself face down on the couch. "Oh, go away!" she wailed. "Stay away!"

He would do that, Bonus promised himself. He'd stay away; he'd stay with the apes where he belonged. He'd wear his satin pants and perform to the best of his ability, and he'd never again try to reach out of his cage for the higher species....

All week in practice he drove hard, and Doc was kept busy patching up the second string; but on Saturday it was the same story. Bonus just couldn't help it. She was up there in the stadium watching him, and he had to show her that just because he was paid for it, was no sign he couldn't be as much of a gentleman at it as some Ivy League boy. Out of forty thousand pairs of eyes, he had to be self-conscious because of one pair!

Just after the start of the second half, Coach Ike took him out.

**I**T was a tough game; and Robertson, the sports-writers agreed, was lucky to win. What was Bonus Reed doing—saving himself for the crucial Green Point game next Saturday? So every-

one hoped. But, they said, it had looked during Robertson's last two games as if Bonus was afraid of getting hurt, or hurting someone else. "He has behaved out there," an Atlanta sports columnist wrote, "like a young man at a garden party. It is really hard to believe that until just recently Bonus Reed played the most murderous game at right tackle that this writer ever saw anybody play anywhere."

"You got a pain somewhere, Bonus?" Coach Ike wanted to know. "Tell me about it. For three years you always went in there and gave all you had, and then gave more. Do I deserve a break like this? What you saving, boy? They can't hurt your looks none. They already done everything to your face they could do without using special tools."

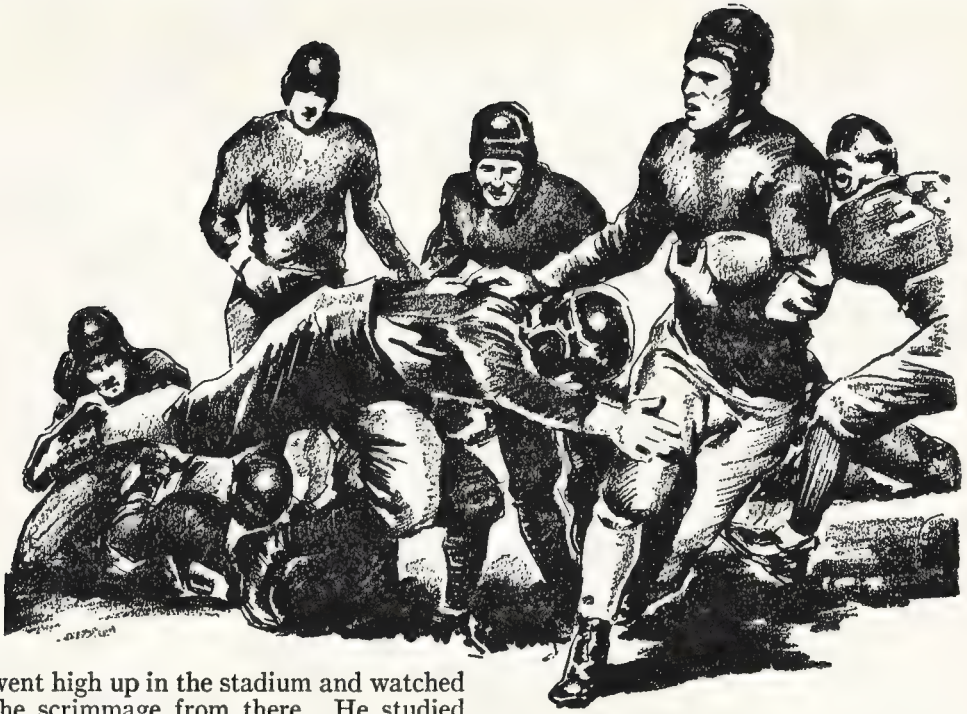
How was he going to tell him? Bonus looked sadly at Ike, feeling Doc's eyes on him. He wondered if Doc knew; he looked so wise. But how could Doc know, when he scarcely knew himself?

"Guess I'm softenin' up," he told Ike.

"Well," Ike said, "you're goin' to soften on the bench. I can't help it, Bonus. What they goin' to say to us around here if we don't take Green Point Saturday and get that Bowl bid? Why, the kids already bought their railroad tickets. You want to cheat the whole school out of that trip?"

After a turn in the second-string line, Bonus sat on the bench with a tablet and a pencil and looked thoughtful. Then he





went high up in the stadium and watched the scrimmage from there. He studied the lines as they surged and broke, observed the weaving patterns of the ball-carriers, triangulated the pass plays.

Leonard would have figured out something. After nights of poring over that book, Bonus agreed with Laura there. But what could *he* figure out?

HE watched a punt soar, missing out-flung hands. There was no thrill like getting your hands on a punt that was just on its way up. Even when you took the leather in your face, it was good. You butted through their line, made two or three great frantic strides, and left the ground. But usually you were too late; so often it just stung your fingertips on the way up. Bonus traced the angle of an ordinary forty- or fifty-yard punt. You had about three seconds, more or less, to get in there. How high did you leap? There were so many times when the ball just shot past your fingers. A matter of inches.

He wrote: "40°." That was about the average angle. Plus three seconds, plus *X*, would equal *B.P.* Blocked Punt. That was the objective. *X* was the height you had to jump, and that was what he had to find out. It might not be an acceptable equation, but the height of the jump was the only element in the problem that he could, within certain limits, control. . . .

Bonus kept his promise—he did not go near; but on Thursday Laura came to him. She was with Doc, and they were

standing watching him leap into the air under the goal-posts. He had tied a string between the uprights, and every time he succeeded in touching it, he moved it a half-inch higher. This all made sense on his tablet, but to everybody else it looked plain crazy.

When he saw Laura, he stopped jumping and walked over to them.

"I guess you know Miss Thompson," Doc said. "We were just wondering what you were doing, Bonus."

Bonus looked suspiciously at Laura. "You a friend of Doc's?"

"Yes," Laura said. "He told me they had a lunatic out here, and I came along for the show. Why don't you put an apple on the string?"

"I went to school with Jim Thompson," Doc said. "Maybe you heard of him, Bonus?"

"Newton found out a lot with an apple," Bonus said. He stared at Doc. "You mean Trouble Thompson? Green Point?"

"Yeah," Doc said. "Laura's pa. All-American guard in 'sixteen-'seventeen."

"Well!" Bonus said. "You?"

"It was just a whimsical little sideline with Dad," Laura said. "His chief interest was engineering. He didn't play for money, or anything like that."

Doc grabbed her arm. "Why! Wait a minute!"

Bonus looked at her coldly. "I stayed away," he said. "I called it quits. You



don't have to be nasty to me any more. You don't have to fight yourself any more, 'cause there's nobody around here after you." He left them then, ducking into the tunnel that led to the dressing-rooms.

Doc looked at Laura. "I thought you were going to help me. I wish to hell I could spank you. I could, too!"

"Try it!" Laura said.

"What's the matter with you?"

"I don't know," Laura admitted with sudden candor.

"Well, I do," Doc said. "Your mother wrote me when she sent you down here—said it was terrifying to live with a twenty-year-old who was all unadulterated brain. She thought maybe if you got a whiff of magnolia and a little taste of our life, you might wake up in other sectors. The cardiac, for instance."

Laura smiled sweetly. "I know. Well, you'll just have to report to her that I'm still pure in cardiac, without fever and terribly mental. . . . Good-by, Sawbones. You'll have to try something else."

Doc still held her arm. He looked at her keenly. "If you were really mental," he said, "you'd have helped me with him. It wouldn't have meant anything to you but a little experiment in practical psychology. I told you my hunch—that Bonus behaved that way in those last two games just because he wanted to prove to someone that he was a gent. That wouldn't have been you, would it? And you wouldn't be responsible somehow for this string business, would you?"

Laura recovered her arm with a jerk. Her voice was hurried, and she didn't meet Doc's clinical-looking gaze. "I'm not a tonic for sick tackles! I don't even want to know anyone in short pants!"

She was almost running when she got to her car.

**S**ATURDAY was a lovely cloudless day, with enough snap in the air for coats and flasks; but the visitors at the Green Point stadium sat quietly, shrouded in gloom, while rough powerful young men in green jerseys swarmed with a professional competence through the Robertson line. In great spirits they ran two touchdowns through the right side; and at the half, with Bonus Reed still on the bench, they were coasting, 13-0.

Was Ike Casey making a mistake? This was pondered throughout the stadium and over the air. But no one really

knew, of course. What would Bonus do if the coach did send him in there?

High up in the Robertson section, Millie leaned across Laura to talk to May. Millie had tears in her eyes. "They don't even play fair! They play dirty. They're just killin' our boys!"

"I already had a date down there for the New Year," May wailed. "What am I goin' to do, Millie?"

"Why don't they put Bonus in?" Laura asked.

Millie looked at her. "Haven't you heard, honey? He's no good any more."

Laura seized her. "They got to put him in!"

Millie looked at May. They were both terribly surprised. "Don't you worry, Laura," May comforted her. "Maybe he'll get in there and do something this very next period."

Millie put an arm around the sister from the North.

"Don't you cry, honey," she said.

**L**AURA wasn't, but she suddenly felt like it. "It's all my fault!" she declared. They were so gentle and kind, these sisters of the South, and so darn' smart! Why, they knew right away. Maybe they had known it even before she did. Why hadn't she realized right from the first minute how good they were? "Oh, Millie!" she cried. "Oh, May!" She gave them each a quick, warm, sisterly embrace and got kissed. Then she jumped up, biting her lip, thinking hard. "I've got to do something!"

"But what *can* you do?" Millie cried helplessly.

"Excuse me!" Laura yelled. She scuttled sideways past the row of legs, out to the aisle.

She returned just as the second half was about to start. She was carrying her hat in her hand, and her hair and eyes were wild.

"Laura!" they cried. "What did you do?"

"Not a damn' thing," Laura said. "I hit a man. A policeman. They wouldn't even let me get near the dressing-room to see him." Two tears ran down her flushed cheeks, and she swore a terrible oath.

"Laura!" Millie cautioned. "Ssshhh!"

Then everyone around them stood up and yelled. Bonus was putting on his helmet as he trotted from the tunnel, going out onto the field to take his position for the kick-off. After that the stadium was quiet as people held their



breath, waiting to see how Bonus was going to behave.

"He's leaping around down there like a—*a Nijinsky!*" the announcer, high in the broadcasting-booth, said. "Every time there's a Green Point punt or a pass down there, Reed is going way up in the air. It really looks silly, folks. And he isn't doing much else down there. Here's a play through Reed. Tuttle, Green Point's substitute at fullback, is going to the forty—the forty-five! . . . He's finally brought down in mid-field by Mike Saunders. Wait a minute—"

Laura was on her feet, screaming: "Watch that Green Point tackle! The big lug! Kill him, Bonus!" She stopped with her mouth open. It was now very quiet. Someone was down, and it was Bonus.

The referee slapped Carr, the Green Point left tackle, on the shoulder. He picked up the ball and began to pace toward the Green Point goal.

"Unnecessary roughness!" Millie said.

"Bonus!" Laura commanded. "Get up, Bonus."

Down on the field Bonus got to his feet and rubbed his head.

"Kill him, Bonus! Get tough, Bonus! Smack the—"

"Laura!" Millie whispered. She tugged at Laura's skirt. "Honey! *Ssshhh!*"

"**H**ERE we go again," the announcer said. "Tuttle's back. The ball's snapped. It's a spinner with—*wait!* . . . There's a fumble! Reed!—Bonus Reed came through in there and smashed that play aimed for his own position before it had a chance to get started. Tuttle fumbled, and Reed's down there sitting on the ball. He's grinning, folks. The Green Pointers are huddled around the referee, now—protesting. Wait! . . . There's a man down! It's Carr, the Pointer left tackle!"

"He come up there just like a big cloud," Tuttle of Green Point said later. "He come sailin' just like a big bird. I never seen any man go so high."

Tuttle was speaking of the second punt that Bonus blocked, the one that led to Robertson's second touchdown. The count was 14 to 13. But no one said this time that Robertson was lucky to win. They had all beheld Bonus out there, towering like a redwood tree, impenetrable as a rock. They had seen him play until he couldn't stand, hammering the left side of the Green Point line to

tatters, launching those bone-cracking tackles and blocks. And they had cheered his bloody grinning face when he was helped off the field just before the gun. . . .

Bonus was in no shape for the dances that night. He was lying in a high bed in the Green Point infirmary with those old *latissimi dorsi* in his back feeling like hot irons. And this time, Ike said, it looked as if they really had used special tools on his face.

Doc was there with Ike, and Bonus was telling them about the string business, and how reading about Leonardo Da Vinci had really inspired him to get such an idea. "The only thing was," Bonus explained, "I couldn't get in there fast enough to make the jump, 'less I got tough about it. After that, though, it worked fine."

**A**NURSE brought him the message. "There's a girl here," she said. "She wants to see the gentleman who played right tackle during the second half this afternoon."

Laura looked in the door. "Hello." Bonus reared forward, staring. Laura walked in and sat down on the bed.

"Gentleman?" Bonus said.

Laura nodded, her lips pressed tightly together and staring at his face.

"I wanted to ask you—" Bonus said. "How do your father and mother get along?"

Laura looked down at his hands. She looked as if she wanted to pick one up and hold it. "All—right," she whispered. "Just fine."

"Um," Bonus said. "I wondered. I looked up your Daddy's record here this morning, and you know, he never got over a C in anything. So you wouldn't exactly say he was a Leonardesque type, either. And Doc was telling me that Trouble Thompson got board and room out of it, too. So it wasn't really so whimsical of him."

Laura glared at Ike and Doc, then said it anyway, very quietly: "Bonus—I'd rather cook your egg in the mornings than hand Leonardo Da Vinci the paint for Mona Lisa's smile."

She had one of his hands now, and Bonus had one of hers. "Eggs," he corrected. He winced as he moved. "A real gentleman probably wouldn't do this right now, but—"

"Think nothing," Laura whispered, making a face over his shoulder at Doc, "—of it, honey!"

Another story by Howard Rigsby will appear in an early issue.





# The Banshee

*The man who gave us that classic "Why the Fitzaldens Are Web-toed" here contributes another joyous novelette of pioneer days.*

"YE'D niver be after belavin' it," Timmy Costigan assured me, "but 'twor niver a snake nor a surveyor run thot line. 'Twor a banshee." If there was a twinkle in his eye, it was hidden by his pipe-smoke.

"Banshee?" I repeated. "There is no such thing as a banshee, and if there were, 'twould be in Ireland."

"Is thot so?" the old man demanded sharply. "If iver ye heard wan greetin' o'er the roof-tree, ye'd belave! And there wor wan in America wanst. He wor the gran'father av me."

I had met Timmy Costigan while trying to buy a hunting-preserve on Baker's Fork for our rod-and-gun club. When Job Pricer, who held title to much of the land, pointed out one boundary-line, I refused to believe any survey could be so crooked. It was part of the survey made by Nathaniel Massie in 1798, and maps of three counties failed to explain the crookedness. One county recorder, after vainly striving to clarify the matter, said: "Nobody cares much about boundary-lines in the hills; the land isn't worth taxes. Why don't you see Timmy Costi-





# *Comes to America*

By HUGH FULLERTON

Illustrated by Jeremy Cannon

gan? He used to work with surveyors, and he knows more about that hill country than anyone."

"Where'll I find him?" I demanded, gratefully if a trifle peevishly.

"Downstairs in the boiler-room. He's courthouse janitor now. You can locate him by the smell of his pipe."

I found Timmy, a weazened, sharp-eyed little Irishman, eighty-odd years old, sitting on a box close to the boiler, and smoking a viciously strong pipe.

"The Pricer farm," Timmy repeated thoughtfully, "—thot would be the line

betwixt the lands granted Colonel James Butler and Bushrod Washington—him thot was George's favorite. Thot line starts in Highland County, bends over into Ross, turns back into Pike, angles into Ross and back again into Pike. 'Tis thinkin' I am thot if 'twas me own land, I'd look no more, and hope some wan would chate me out of half of it. For what do ye be after wantin' a survey? The land isn't worth a dom."

I explained that I was buying the land for a club, and wanted to learn where that mysterious line meandered, so that our



members would not be trespassing on anyone's land, and the neighbors wouldn't be trespassing on ours.

"Trespassin', is it?" said Timmy belligerently. "Are ye after thinkin' ye can set up a landlord system in a free country, and perhaps charge a poor mon with poachin'?"

"Nothing like that," I protested. "We want to be friendly with the neighbors and not disturb their property."

"Thin don't be after worritin' about trespassin'," said Timmy sagely. "The hill folk'll hunt over yer land as they've always done. Wance they know ye, they'll welcome ye to hunt theirs. There's



nothin' but 'coons and rabbits and blackberries grows thereabouts."

"Still, I'd like to know about that line," I insisted. "It seems to run every which way up the hills. I think a snake must have surveyed it."

It was then that Timmy, puffing slowly and gurglingly to get the last bit of satisfaction from the tobacco remaining in his pipe, told me that a banshee had surveyed the line, and I gave him a startled, too-sharp reply.

"Maybe you have them in Ireland," I hedged, when I realized I had hurt his feelings. "But a banshee is a woman. The name comes from *ban*, meaning a fairy, and *sith*—a woman. It's the wife of a fairy, and what would a fairy's wife be doing in the wilderness of Ohio, surveying?"

"'Tis the Gaelic ye're after knowin', thin?" he commented. "And me thinkin' mayhap ye wor a furriner."

"My tribe came from the Isles," I assured him. "But what about that boundary-line?"

"I'm a mon of few words," he said. "But 'tis a long tale, and a thrue wan, and me throat is dhry. Mayhap if I hod a dhrop to clear me throat—"

Since a drop of something is a necessary part of a club secretary's equipment, I learned the story of Shano Boards, the banshee who became a surveyor.

WHEN Shano Boards was born (Timmy related), weighin' nigh onto eleven pounds, Bridgy Dorely, the midwife, spanked him with the great hand of her on the broad back of him to start the breathin', and he let out so great a yell as to scare both the pigs from under the settle.

"Joseph and Mary, the voice av him!" Bridgy gasped. "'Twill be heard to the Dharran Shoun."

'Twas a prophet Bridgy was. The voice of Shano Boards was heard to the end of the world—for Ohio was the end of the world in them days, though Bridgy meant only the mountains of Connemara.

The Old One, Shepelaun Boards, was sitting outside the cottage, waiting for his grandson's wife to be after having her baby, so that he might have his meal. 'Twas an old, old man that Shepelaun was; but in his youth he had been called *Shamus Caha*—James the Wrestler; and when he heard the cry, it stirred the memories of his boyhood in him.

"O-ho!" said Shepelaun in his thin old voice. "'Tis a bhoy it is after bein', and



The moon was rising; 'twas then that Shano tuned his voice; it rose till 'twas like the scream of the big wind over the chimney-pots.

the voice av him like the foghorn on Galway Light! 'Tis the voice av me grandmammy's mammy's pappy come to earth again."

When Bridgy had washed the babe and put him in his mother's arms, turned the pigs out of the cottage and made the gruel, the Old One tiptoed into the room and looked at his new great-grandson.

"'Tis a foine boy, Bridgy," he whispered. "He'll be after bringin' riches and ease to this house."

"Will ye hould yer whist?" said Bridgy sharply. "And be gettin' out of the way whilst I clane up and help the poor woman—and her at it the night long! Ye'd better not be thryin' to pretend ye have the second sight and can tell what this tyke can do—ye'll have His Lordship afther ye for talkin' foolishness."

"A foine mon, His Lordship," said Shepelaun, "aven if his father was English, divil fly away wid him! He's not carin' if a poor mon snares a hare or a pheasant to give a taste to the praties."

"Whin he was younger, he'd wrestle any mon in the county, and buy the usquebaugh did he be thrown, and with no thought of him bein' the Duke of Ballycroft. 'Tis many a dhrink I might hov had from His Grace had we been of an age; for in me youth I was Shamus Caha, and a great mon at the fairs."

"'Tis no place for an old wan," Bridgy declared, brandishing a broom threateningly. "Be after takin' the spade and the shovel and go out and hoe the praties."

"T'hell wid the praties!" said Shepelaun. "I'm goin' to the tavern."

"To the tavern, is it?" said Bridgy. "And his father already there celebratin' and spendin' the money the poor woman saved to pay me."

"Thin I'll be joinin' him," answered Shepelaun, dodging toward the door lest Bridgy take the broom to him. "For 'tis the *asthore na Erin* the lad'll be when he is grown."

"The darlint of Ireland, is it?" exclaimed Bridgy. "Thin he'll not be takin' after his forebears!"

THE Old One went to Ballyhaunus, into the snug of Alick More's tavern, where he found Rory Boards, father of the new baby, and young Wedger Touill, standing with arms over each other's shoulders, each holding a pint of ale.

"'Tis a foine bhoey," the Old One told them, "and all is well. I'll be after havin' a wee dhrup wid ye in celebration."

"Ye will not," said Rory. "The money is all."

"Bridgy will be after takin' the broom to ye whin she learns av it," said Shepelaun, signaling Alick to bring him a mug.

"Twill do her no good," answered Rory. "'Tis not like thot she can put him back where he came from."

"'Tis little good ye are, Rory, as a father," the Old One told him. "Ye should be mendin' the thatch and dhroppin' the praties, and not wastin' time dhrinkin' and carousin'."

"Ye might be after dhroppin' the praties yerself," said Rory. "Wid another mouth to feed, we might be needin' the room ye take up."





Shano, well pleased to think how he had evened scores, had snared two grouse and a fat hare.

"'Twas not reprov'in' ye thot I came to do," said the Old One hastily. "Will ye and young Touill join me in dhrinkin' to the health of the new lad?"

"I'll do thot," said young Touill, "aven if me auld mon calls me a liar whin I tell him I had a dhrink from ye, an' him niver able to get wan."

"And how is the Touill the day?" inquired Shepelaun. "A grand mon, and 'twould pleasure me to remedy thot oversight, were he here."

"'Tis his day for quarrelin' with the O'Shea," said Wedger. "Not aven a free drink would make him l'ave off rowin' the O'Shea—'tis his only amusement."

"The two of thim always quarrelin'," growled Rory, "and nayther wan remimberin' what 'twas all about."

"They do thot," said Wedger. "The quarrelin' was over a pig. Whin the grandsire av me was a bhoys, his father, who wor thin the Touill, had a sow that birthed thirteen pigs, and she wid but twelve teats. The Touill bargained with the O'Shea to take wan pig and fatten it on shares. Whin they came to the dividin', the O'Shea gave the Touill half, but thot half was all feet and head and chitlins, whilst he kept the meat. They fought and quarreled to the deaths av thim, and their sons took it up, and next I suppose 'twill be my turn."

"Ye do well to honor your ancestors," said the Old One. "I'll be pleased to buy ye another dhrink in honor of yer grandsire and my new descendant."

"Whist, auld mon," Rory warned him. "Don't be after throwin' money away thot I may need to borry. Wan would think 'twas yer first baby bein' born, instead of my fifth."

"'Tis a greater day than whin me first was born," Shepelaun said solemnly. "For he was the worthless father av ye, Rory, and this new bhoys has the gift."

"What gift be ye sp'akin' about now?" demanded Rory.

THE Old One looked at Rory, and winked a hint to spake aisy before young Touill.

"'Tis a great, sthrong bhoys he is after bein'," he said cunningly. "I can tell he has the gift by the yell av him."

"Would ye be makin' a wrestler av him?" shouted Rory. "Like yerself was in youth, goin' round the fairs, and groanin' and sweatin' in the dirt, tuggin' at some other big omadhaun for a few pennies, and callin' yerself the Champion of Mayo."

"'Tis not the wrestlin', Rory," said the Old One in a low voice so that young Touill might not hear. "'Tis the voice av him thot will be the makin' av his fortune. Niver has there been such a voice in Ireland since me grandmammy's mammy's pappy died, peace to his ashes!"

The Old One dashed a tear from his eye in memory of the great man, dead these eighty years or more.

"I niver heard of him," scowled Rory. "What did he iver do?"

"He wor the greatest banshee in all Ireland," the Old One whispered. "The bhoys will be a greater, l'avin' ye let me thrain him."

"Ho-ho," Rory laughed. "'Twor a fairy he wor, and ye'd make a fairy of me bhoys."

"There be banshees and banshees," said the Old One.

"The onliest wans I know fly over the rooftree, and wail when death is comin' to a house."

"I'll not be after listenin' to talk av fairies and banshees," said Wedger Touill, swallowing the last of the ale in his pot. "His Lordship will be layin' a shillelagh on ye if he hears such talk. He says 'tis all dommed foolishness, and Father Ryan agrees. I'll bid ye the bottom av the avenin' whilst it's still light on the bog."

He took himself away in haste. When he had gone, the Old One explained his plan for the babe, and Rory listened, shaking his head disapprovingly at first, but agreeing at last. And when Alick More bought a drink in honor of the new baby and put up the shutters, the career of Shano Boards was decided, and him still mewling in his mother's arms.

Shano grew to be a big, silent gawk of a boy who did not yell and play as the others did. From the time he could walk, he followed the Old One about, and each day they went into the hills where none could see them, and the Old One trained the young one. Sometimes the peat-cutters in the bog heard strange sounds from the hills, and hastened home before darkness should catch them. But Shepelaun taught Shano never to raise his voice, nor let anyone know the power of it.

Once, whilst in school, he forgot. He was at some mischief, bending over to stick a pin in the pants of a lad on the bench in front, when Father Ryan spied him, and slipping up quiet-like, swished his cane against the seat of Shano's tight britches. Shano lepped high in the air and unloosed so great a yell that the school-house rocked. Never was such a sound heard in Ireland, unless mayhap that time long ago when Finn Mac Cumhl's whiskers got caught in the grindstone whilst he was sharpening his sword.

"Saints presarve us!" cried Father Ryan, looking around and seeing the childer hiding under the benches. "'Tis like the bellow av a bull mixed with the scream av a stallion! Bend over, till I find out can ye make it again."

OLD Shepelaun heard of this, and was afraid to wait longer. Each day he shut Shano in the sod-house where the praties were stored, with orders to practice his yell.

"Don't be after yellin' loud," he cautioned. "Yell in a whisper. I'll be in Alick More's cozy, a mile away, and I'm deaf, so just yell loud enough for me to hear."

He sat in Alick's cozy, sipping ale, and when the sounds came, he called attention to them. Afore long folk were saying round the countryside that the Old Scratch was greeting over beyant the barley.

One day the Old One found the Touill in Alick More's, cursing the weather, that was so bad it kept the O'Shea indoors and interfered with the quarreling. Shepelaun stood the Touill a pint, and when he heard Shano greeting in the distance, he cupped his hand to his ear and said:

"Whist, Touill, do ye be after hearin' somethin'? 'Tis deaf I am."

"'Tis no human sound," said the Touill, growing pale.

"Hov ye heard tales that a banshee has come to the parish?" asked the Old One in a whisper.



"Hush yer whist, mon," said the Touill. "Do ye want a taste of His Lordship's bull-whip?"

"Duke or no Duke, I belave what me ears tell me," answered the Old One as Shano whispered another yell.

"I'd not be after sayin' 'twor a banshee," remarked the Touill thoughtfully, "But wor it not for His Lordship, I'd hov no doubts. 'Tis hopin' I am thot if it is the banshee, she will howl over the roof av the O'Shea."

"Whin I wor a boy," put in the Old One, "I had friends with the fairies. Mayhap they remimber and would favor me."

"'Twould be payin' well I'd be if so be it could be arranged."

"How much would ye be after payin'?" asked the Old One. "I'm thot old I hov no fear av thim, and mayhap would welcome hearin' the call of the banshee."

"I'd pay tin pound," said the Touill.

"Five pound in advance, and I'll shpake wid the fairies," offered the Old One, "—if ye'll kape it quiet from His Lordship."

The bargain was struck, and the Old One, when he reached home, took Shano into the sod-house where none could hear.

"The voice av ye carried well the day," he said. "'Tis not as sthrong as the voice av me grandmammy's mammy's pappy—whin he opened his mouth to greet, the fisher-folk in the Isles shortened sail, thinkin' a hurricane wor comin'. But ye are young yit. 'Twill improve. Tomorrow night ye start worruk."

"Worruk, is it?" demanded Shano. "Ye've tould me all the years I'd niver have to worruk."

"I mint the worruk ye hov to do is no worruk at all. 'Tis no worruk for ye to greet, is it?"





"'Twor good for a first try," Shepelaun said. "I'll warrant ivery O'Shea in the hut has the head of him under the bed-clothes."

"It is not. But who pays anywan for yellin'?"

"'Tis the Touill this toime. Five pound he gave me, and five more he'll give whin the worruk is done. I pledged meself to the Touill that the banshee will howl above the house of the O'Shea in Ballyloon."

"And I'm to be the banshee?" asked Shano. "His Lordship will be after b'atin' me wid his whip av he foinds out."

"His Lordship has no faith in banshees," said the Old One. "But the O'Shea has. Wanst ye howl at nine o'clock this night, wanst at tin, and twicet at eliven. Thin ye'll go home and slape the slape of the innocent. Wan night a week ye will howl for the O'Shea until somewan in the house dies."

"I don't loike it," said Shano. "'Tis nigh winter, and I may be out in the cauld until spring. 'Twould be aisier just to kill wan av thim O'Sheas."

"Foolish lad, do ye think I bargained to bring the banshee to the O'Shea widout knowin' what I know?" said the Old One. "The O'Shea himself is past ninety, and a dhrinkin' mon; two av the boys that poach on His Lordship's land are loike to be shot by a keeper anny night."

"His Lordship wouldn't hov thot," Shano argued. "'Tis a patient mon he is, who niver begrutches a hare or a pheasant. 'Tis loiked he is by the folk, and not wan sits in a hedge to shoot at him whin he rides at night. Many the hare I've lifted from his covers, and salmon from his waters, and no worse luck than a blow with a sthick from a keeper."

"'Tis thrue," the Old One admitted. "But somewan—I'm not sayin' who—has lifted two av his sucklin' pigs, and thim from his great sow that won all the

prizes. And he is in thot great a rage he tould the keepers to shoot. . . . 'Tis no banshee needed to tell that death hangs o'er the house of the O'Shea. We'll go the night and warn him."

**B**EFORE the moon rose, Shano and old Shepelaun were squatting in a hedge the length of twenty hoe-handles from the house of the O'Shea. And come nine o'clock, Shano reared back the head of him and unloosed a howl that was like the squeal of a rusty windmill, mingled with the moans of a sick horse and the bellowing of a bull with its tail cut by a moonlighter.

"'Twor good for a first try," Shepelaun said. "I'll warrant ivery O'Shea in the hut has the head of him under the bed-clothes."

Twice more that night Shano greeted, getting better each time, till the sound of his wails reached Roscommon.

'Twas an easy job, that first one, for inside of three weeks the O'Shea died in his bed, and one of his nevvys got boozy at the wake, fell off his horse on the way home and broke his neck. This pleased the Touill mightily, so that he took back the counterfeit five-pound note he had given the Old One and handed over ten pounds in gold. . . .

After that Shano's business grew fast. The news spread that a banshee was wailing in Mayo, and 'twas whispered around that old Shepelaun Boards could keep it away or point the place for the banshee to go. Some paid him for the one, and them that had enemies, for t'other.

Shano was kept busy sometimes four nights a week, and the Old One went from Galway Bay over beyond Lough Conn, learning who was sick and like to

die soon, and who wanted them dead. 'Twas careful he was never to promise the banshee would howl until he knew someone in the house was near the end. . . . The gold poured in, and the Boards family added a room to the cottage and built a new sty for the pigs. Whilst the Old One did all the real work, walkin' miles looking for folk that hated their neighbors, Shano went sparkin' the girls, and Rory, with nothing to do, sat in the cozy at Alick More's, drinking ale.

Had it not been that Shano Boards became so proud of the voice of him as to think himself great, he might have grown rich and maybe been knighted some day, like the usquebaugh-makers and the ale-brewers. But easy living went to the head of him. He was not satisfied to howl three times a night three or four times a week, but must needs have more to do.

Time hung heavy on his hands, and he wanted to be dancing and drinking instead of lying in a hedge waiting for time to howl. He fell into the habit of creeping through the fields and preserves between his howlings, and setting snares for hares and pheasant. Sometimes he came home in the night with a fat hen or duck. The Old One, who had been a cunning poacher in his youth, warned him, but Shano never was a one to heed the gab of experience.

"The old age is gettin' ye," he laughed. "'Tis no danger there is. Whin I howl wanst, ivery keeper and sarvent in hearin' is after hidin' under the beds, and none dares lave the house. There is no chanst that I be caught."

Shano was right about that. The folk all over the countryside were so fearful, that the sound of a pig stirring in its sleep or a sheep blatting in the night made them tremble and draw the shutters. When anyone died, there were whispers that the banshee had cried over that house, even though Shano hadn't been within miles of the place.

THE tale came at last to the ears of His Lordship, Duke of Ballycroft—and the red face of him turned purple when he learned that the folk were in terror.

"Idiotic!" he snorted. "No such thing as a banshee. Damned Irish foolishness! Got to be stopped. Binns, if you hear any more of this idiocy, tell me."

"Yes, Your Lordship," said Mr. Binns, the butler.

"Tell the wardens, Binns, that if there is any more of that damned caterwauling, to shoot whoever is doing it."

"Yes, Your Lordship. Only—"

"Only what, Binns?"

"Only it isn't possible to shoot a banshee, Your Lordship."

"Banshee, the devil!" shouted the Duke. "I told you there is no such thing as a banshee!"

"Yes, Your Lordship. But the servants think—"

"Servants think? Damn' foolishness! Servants can't think, Binns. No right to think. Never could think. If they could, they wouldn't be servants. Get out, Binns."

Mr. Binns got out, crossing himself as soon as the back of him was turned and His Lordship could not see.

HIS LORDSHIP was a kind man, although handy with his riding-whip, especially when the gout troubled him. It made him wild in the head to have the tenantry trembling in their beds and whispering about banshees and fairies. The fact that Binns, who had served him forty years, believed in banshees made his gout worse. In the morning he called for his horse, saying he would ride the estate and put a stop to the nonsense. But when he tried to put the gouty foot of him in the stirrup, he let out a screech and followed it up with the finest bit of swearing heard in Ireland in years.

"Bart, damn ye!" he shouted, calling his eldest son, the Hon. Bartholomew. "Ride around to every cottage and tell the tenants this damned nonsense has got to stop. If any of them says he heard a banshee, have him flogged."

The Hon. Bart rode over the countryside, and not one would admit having heard of a banshee. As he was going home in the evening, he met Shano Boards, who was on his way to do a bit of howling over by Ballynag and planning to pick up a fat pheasant hen betimes. Shano tugged at his forelock and saluted the Hon. Bart politely with, "Good avenin', Yer Lordship," and made to pass by.

"Whither are ye bound?" asked the Hon. Bart, curious-like.

"To Alick More's to bring home me auld man," said Shano.

"And who is your old man?"

"Rory Boards is the father av me, and Katie Sullivan me mither."

"Then you are the big lummo Shano Boards I've heard about," said Bart.

"What do you work at?"

"Worruk?" asked Shano, taken by surprise. "I hov none, savin' the praties."



He got away from His Lordship, but Bart and Charles clung to the course, stroking him with every jump. He kept the pig as long as possible; but finally he dropped it.



"What do you know of this foolishness about a banshee?" asked Bart.

"I hov heard talk, but I pay no heed."

Shano was speaking in a whisper, but even when he whispered, 'twas like a shout, and the Hon. Bart eyed him, suspicious-like.

"I'm surprised a strapping lad like you does no work," he said.

Just then the Old One came up and explained:

"He manes thot the worruk he does is nawthin' for a sthrong lad like him, Yer Lordship. He worruks in the fields, and minds the pigs, and digs praties; but he is thot sthrong he could do thrice as much and not feel tired."

"Then why doesn't he do it?" asked Bart. "And who are you to be answering for him?"

"I'm his grandsire, Yer Lordship."

"Oh-ho," said Bart. "Then you're the old Shepelaun that folk who know no better say talks with the fairies! Maybe you know something about this caterwauling and screeching they say is a banshee."

"I've heerd noises," the Old One admitted craftily. "I'm not sayin' 'tis a banshee or 'tis not a banshee; nor am I

sayin' it brings death. Folk die whether warned or not."

"Mayhap av ye heerd it, ye'd belave," Shano broke in, liking not the young lord's manner.

"And mayhap you want a taste of this dog-whip," said Bart sharply. "I think you know more than you admit, and I'll tell you if I catch some flannel-mouthed, thick-headed fool making a bigger fool of himself than the Lord made him to start with, I'll fill him full of bird-shot."

"Oh-ho," said the Old One, as young Bart rode away. "'Tis suspectin' he is, and 'tis best ye go careful for a time."

Shano was so filled with pride and so angry because Bart had come nigh calling him a thick-headed fool to his face, that he had not even the grace to thank the Old One for saving him from his own foolishness.

"A big fool I am, he says," Shano muttered. "And me the greatest banshee av all Ireland. Fill me wid shot, will he? I've a moind to greet at his door till he thinks the divil himself is screechin'."

"Hov sinse," old Shepelaun warned him. "No wan in the parish would pay to hov the banshee put the fear in His Lordship. Should he die, where would we



foind anither so aisy wid the rints and so mild wid the poachers?"

But Shano was young and foolish in the head, and the words of young Bart kept stirring in the mind of him until one night he slipped into the park, close by the big mansion, and waited till the moon should rise. To pass the time, he baited a few snares, knowing that so close to the castle poachers never ventured, and the keepers would not be watching.

The Duke and his sons the Hon. Bart and the Hon. Charles sat down to dinner as the moon was rising, red in the mists of the east. 'Twas then that Shano tuned his voice. The first notes were low, making the air shudder, and his voice rose till 'twas like the scream of the big wind over the chimneypots.

"Good Lord!" said His Lordship, dropping his fork. "The bull is choking! Binns, send Shamus to the barn at once."

He glared at Mr. Binns, who was standing by the pantry door, the silver buckles on the knee-britches of him knocking together like castanets, and his hands shaking until the roast was nigh onto sliding from the platter.

"What's the matter with you, Binns?" the Duke roared.

"The banshee, Your Lordship!" said Mr. Binns, trembling. "Somewan will die in the house."

"Someone will die if you let that roast fall, Binns," said His Lordship sharply. "And someone's sure to die if I get my hands on the neck of the imbecile making that ungodly noise. Binns, I've told you again and again there is no such thing."

"Yes, Your Lordship," said Mr. Binns, trembling still more. "In the daytime I belave ye; but in the night, hearin' thim sounds, I misdoubt."

"Binns, you're a damn' fool! Set down the roast before you drop it, and if it isn't done rare, I'll banshee you! Get out!"

Reassured by His Lordship's lack of fear, Mr. Binns recovered some of his calmness and went below-stairs. He was serving the extra port when Shano greeted the second time, excelling all his best efforts. He started with a low rumble like thunder over Krogh Patrick, lifted his voice note by note till 'twas like the wail of a hurricane around the light of Kinsale, and from that till it sounded like the screaming of lost souls scourged between the Isles of Hell by harridans with whips.



"My word!" said His Lordship, choking on his port. "That infernal noise again! Binns, go out and put him out of his misery."

Mr. Binns' knees cracked together and he dropped the decanter.

"'Tis onpossible, Your Lordship," he said. "I hov not a silver bullet, and hod I wan, 'tis onpossible to see a banshee."

"Banshee, the devil!" exploded the Duke. "Bart, we'll have to stop this noise ourselves."

"Right-ho, Father," said the Hon. Bart. "It seems to come from that copse over by the south wing."

"It seems to howl once an hour," said His Lordship, looking at his watch. "The next should come at ten o'clock. We'll be waiting for it."

"I'll be with you, Father," said young Charles.

"You're too young. Stay in the house."

"You've told me to go to the devil many times," chuckled Charles. "I'll not miss the chance to obey you."

All unbeknowing, and thinking everyone in the castle was too scared to put head outdoors, Shano was well pleased to think how he had evened scores with the Hon. Bart. He had snared two grouse and a fat hare in the first hour. In the second he slipped up to the pens and smothered the squeals of one of His Lordship's prized suckling-pigs, cut its throat and laid a trail of blood to the very doorstep, snickering to think how it would add to the fright of them when the blood was found in the morning.

Just at ten o'clock Shano laid back his head and emitted the most prodigious howl of all. The breath of him waved the barley in the field half a mile away. He was just starting another and bigger howl, when His Lordship and his sons fell upon him from both flanks and rear.

"As I thought, the big simpleton of a Boards!" Bart shouted. And the three of them laid on with their shillelaghs to give him such a beating as none ever had in Ireland since the great O'Neil heard that his son was courting an English girl.

SHANO started to run—the three of them after him, beating him with the blackthorns, and him wailing at every jump. Burdened down with the pheasants and the pig, Shano could not escape. First he threw away one bird, then the hare, which lightened him till he got away from His Lordship. But Bart and Charles clung to the course, stroking him with every jump.

He kept the pig as long as possible, knowing that if ever the Duke caught him with that suckling in the hands of him, he'd spent the next five years in jail. But finally he dropped it and went lepping through the barley, his feet scarce touching the ground, and taking the walls and hedges in stride like a hunter with the fox in sight.

Shano was just commencing to slow down, thinking he had escaped, when His Lordship, who had been urging his sons to the chase by "Yoicks!" and "Tally-ho!" stumbled over the carcass of the pig. When he found its throat was cut, he lifted the head of him and let out so great a roar that Shano scarce could equal it; Shano, two fields away, started running again.

"Mither av God!" he gasped. "'Tis the real banshee after me for makin' mock av her."

His Lordship kicked the carcass of the pig with the gouty toe of him—and he screamed louder. And Shano, thinking himself pursued, ran faster until in the morning he came to Galway Bay. 'Twas thinking he was of lepping clear across the bay, but he lepped onto a ship that was sailing, and hid in the hold till it was far from land.

TIMMY COSTIGAN relighted his pipe and gazed wistfully at his empty flask.

"'Tis time I worked," he said. "The liquor is all. That was the way the banshee happed to come to America."

"And what has that to do with the survey-line?" I demanded.

"I am a mon av few words," said Timmy simply. "I wor leadin' up to thot." He sucked noisily on his empty pipe.

I handed over my tobacco and my own flask. Timmy drank deeply, then placed the flask on the floor within reach.

"Thin I can be tellin' ye the throe tale, as I had it from the lips of Shano Boards himself, a mon who niver lied whin the truth served as well."

When Shano Boards, runnin' from the Duke and his two sons, hid aboard ship l'avin' Galway Bay (Timmy related), he had no thought of goin' beyant Cork. And come mornin', he stuck his head from the hatch, and whin he saw naught but water, he wor thot surprised ye could hov knocked him down with a shamrock.

Whilst he was gazin' at the waves and tryin' to see where Ireland might be, the mate spied him, slipped up behind and fetched him a kick right where His Lordship's shillelagh had landed oftenest.

Shano yelled from the hurt of it. 'Twas not a big yell for the voice of him, but loud enough to raise the captain a foot from the deck.

"What hov ye there, Mr. McGillicuddy?" the captain shouted. "From the noise av it, I thought the topmast blew away."

"A blinkin' stowaway, sir," said the mate. "I but lifted him a small kick, and the noise ye heard came out av him."

"Are ye a sailor man?" the captain asked.

"Sailor?" said Shano. "I'm after bein' the best ban—the best sailor mon av all Ballyhaunus." He remembered just in time that the Old One, his great-gran'ther, had warned him never to whisper to anyone about the banshee.

"'Tis no sailor ye are," said the captain, seeing the soft hands of him. "'Tis the biggest liar of all Ireland ye are."

"'Tis the truth I'm tellin'," Shano insisted. "I must be the best sailor av Ballyhaunus, seein' there are no sailors there."

"Anyhow ye're a sthrong buck av a bhoy," said the captain. "We'll make a sailor av ye before we reach America."

"America?" asked Shano. "Is thot where we're after goin'? The great-uncle av me father, Sean McManus, wint there, and the polis niver found him."

"Aboard ship ye'll say 'sir' whin ye spake to me," said the captain.

"Ho-ho, sir, and be dommed to ye!" laughed Shano. "'Tis no Lordship ye are, to be sirred."

"Mr. McGillicuddy," said the captain, the voice of him misleading soft, "give the mon five av the cat to teach him to say 'sir'."

Whin the mate laid the cat on Shano's back, and him still sore from the b'atin' the Duke gave him, Shano howled so loud the ship bore along six knots in nigh onto a dead calm. The captain saw it, and for two days he kept Shano sitting aft, howling behind the sails and nigh deafening the crew, until a fair wind came to relieve him.

AND so it was Shano sailed for six weeks across the ocean to America, and when the ship reached Philadelphia the captain handed him six shillings and said: "This is for the worruk ye did. And for kapin' me awake and scarin' the growth of a year from me with yer dommed caterwaulin', I'm givin' ye *this*."

With that he kicked Shano with the great boot of him so that he went flying



"'Tis a bold lad ye are," said Maureen.

half across Front Street. He went the rest of the way himself to a public house, where he called for a pint of stout.

"'Tis no stout we hov here," said the publican. "Rum to warm a sailor on a cold night, and whisky made of corn."

"I'll be after tryin' the usquebaugh," said Shano.

The drink fair burned the gullet of him, and he spluttered: "What sort of usquebaugh is it? It tastes like the Divil brewed it, but I misdoubt if anything in Ireland could warm a mon so in one drink."

"'Tis the good corn whisky the settlers on the Allegheny make," said the publican. "Sure, and niver a penny tax will they pay, anny more than we'd pay yer dommed King George."

"'Tis no king av mine he iver wor," Shano said. "How far is it to this Allegheny, and who owns it?"

"'Tis free land that we took fair from the Indians and the Frinch, but 'tis three hundred mile over the mountains, and the roads bad. And 'tis settled, so if ye want free land whin ye get there, ye'll hov to go further to the Ohio country, where there's plenty for the takin'."



"Free land?" asked Shano, amazed. "Faith, and 'tis there I'll be goin', no matter how far! This America must be a big place."

"Ye could put tin thousand Irelands in it, and not fill the half," said the publican.

"And this village," Shano asked, "is it as big as Ballyhaunus?"

"Ballyhaunus, is it?" shouted the publican. "'Tis fifty Ballyhaunuses, the biggest city av the land!

"The grandest sight ye'll iver see, is right here in Philadelphia. 'Tis Independence Hall, where we shook the shackles av the English from our legs."

"I'll be lookin' at it," said Shano. "Mayhap I'll go back and build the likes av it in Ireland."

He went up the street till he came to a green park where there was a red brick building and a white cupola atop it for the bell. The sight of the green sod brought the homesickness for Ireland upon Shano, and he felt sorry for himself, so far from home. Finally he laid back the head of him and howled from misery, forgetting the power of his voice.

The sound rose like the roar of a hurricane, and the bell in the cupola swayed and swung, and rang louder and louder, till of a sudden it gave off a flat note. Folk came running, thinking mayhap the city was afire. And when they heard the sweet notes of the Liberty Bell turned sour, they gathered around Shano and threatened him. Then the watch came and carted him off to jail.

'Twas a nice clean jail, like a room at the side of the constable's house, and none in it but Shano. He was more comfortable there than in the cottage at Ballyhaunus, and not near so likely to be waked by the pigs scrapin' under the bed. But he was still lonesome and homesick after the constable locked him in.

TOWARD evening, growing hungry, he shook the door and shouted for something to eat, the great voice of him almost bursting the bars. Instead of the jailer, who should come but a strapping young colleen, with black hair and a glint of red in the black, and blue eyes that laughed.

"What'll ye be after makin' such sounds?" she asked. "Ye have the peaceable Quaker folk fearin' 'tis Doomsday upon them."

"'Tis hungry I am, ma'am," said Shano. "I thought to fetch the constable."

"I'm Maureen McCarthy, his daughter," she said. "'Tis no need ye have

to wake the dead, for I've been waitin' to hear ye sober up for your dinner."

"'Tis not drunk I am," said Shano. "I had but wan dhrink."

"Lackin' the cash for another, thin," she answered sharp-like. "If ye were sober, why did ye howl like a banshee and break the Liberty Bell?"

"'Twor homesick I wor, and I gave a bit of a wail. The bell swung with the breath av me and broke," Shano explained sorrowfully. "I was meanin' no harm."

"'Tis like they'll shoot ye," said Maureen. "'Tis like treason to ruin the grand bell that rung out Liberty to the world, and the Colonies will not like it."

"Shoot me? And just for breakin' a bell?" Shano asked.

WITH that he started to keen and moan quietly, and the voice of him kept rising until Maureen was fearful the bars might be shaken from the windows. Sorry for him she felt, too, when so big a man wept, and she said:

"Mayhap if ye'd promise not to lift the great voice of ye, they'd let you go. My Uncle Shamus might give ye a job on his farm in Germantown, where he raises pigs. 'Tis certain they'll order ye out of town."

Shano groaned when she mentioned work, and groaned louder when she spoke of pigs, for it seemed pigs were forever bringing bad luck to him. Then he thought perhaps they were not prize pigs like His Lordship's, and might do no harm.

"Is your uncle the Duke of the place ye call Germantown?" he asked. "'Tis no likin' I hov for dukes or landlords."

Maureen looked at him with scorn. "'Tis no dukes nor earls nor landlords we have in this country," she said. "Uncle Shamus owns his farm, with a bit of a mortgage on it. He raises hogs to sell in the city, and takes the hat of him off to no one, being a free American."

"Thot sounds grand," Shano answered. "But it sounds like hard worruk. I mind how hard me mither worked tendin' the pigs back home in Ballyhaunus."

"'Tis plenty of work he is after doin'," Maureen admitted. "But work will not harm a great, strong, foine-lookin' lad like you. I'm thinkin' 'tis high time ye settled and took a wife and learned to work."

"Little I know of farmin' or pig-raisin'!" said Shano. "Poachin' wor me main job in Ireland."

"Poachin'!" exclaimed Maureen. "'Tis stealin' ye call by another name. There's no need for anyone to be after stealin' in this land. There are birds and fish and game for the takin' in the Ohio country. Ye may shoot or snare the partridge and the great bronze turkey, or a bear or a deer—and none to forbid."

"'Tis the second time I've heard the name," Shano said. "Where may be this Ohio country? And is it true there are no landlords?"

"The land is free. If a man is brave and can fight off the Indians, he may have for his own a farm greater than all the lands His Lordship, as ye call him, owns in Ireland."

"Thot is the land for me," Shano decided. "I'll be after goin' whin ye unlock the door. I'll take a great estate, and mayhap build a castle and give it to ye."

As he spoke, Shano put his arm about the slender waist of her, and he no longer felt homesick when he saw how neat she fit in the crook of it; nor did Maureen try to move away.

"'Tis a bold lad ye are," she said. "If it were a sweetheart of mine goin' out among the savages, I'd be proud to wait till he built a house and sint for me."

With that she was gone, but come evening she told her father, the constable, that the great-voiced prisoner would ruin them with his eating, and the constable begged the magistrate to save him from ruin. So in two days Shano was set free with a warning to be out of the city by nightfall, and make no sound before he left.

**S**HANO found a wagon-train all ready to start over the mountains to the west, and boldly asked:

"Do ye need a mon who would work?"

"Thot we do," said the man. "Can ye drive oxen?"

"I wor the best ox-driver av all Ireland," Shano said.

"Thin drive this six-ox team to the loadin'."

"Where in blazes are the reins?" asked Shano, climbing quickly onto the great wagon.

"Ye niver drove an ox-team in yer life," said the captain. "'Tis the chief of liars ye are."

"I told ye truth," Shano argued. "There are no ox-teams in Ireland, so there could be no better driver than I. 'Tis in a hurry I am to reach the Ohio country, and sought only to save time."



"If thot's the truth, ye'd best save yer breath for lyin', and for walkin'," the captain told him. "'Tis four hundred mile to the Ohio lands, and mostly up-hill, and ye walk by the oxen and guide thim with the long whip."

**A**ND 'twas walking Shano did, beside the great teams, until they came to the Youghioghenny River, where great flat-boats were a-building, and he decided it was easier on the feet to ride the boats than to walk. He persuaded the flat-boatman to give him a job, and after nearly wrecking the boat a couple of times, learned to handle the big steering-oar and guide the raft through any channel. By the time they floated into the Ohio, he could take his ease and watch the great hills and forests slip backward as the boat moved down the muddy tide. 'Twas a pleasant journey, till one night they tied up at a clearing on the Kentucky shore, and a settler came from his still with jugs of corn whisky.

A great roaring fire they put up on the iron sheet on the stern of the boat, and the crew and the settlers passed the jug and sang songs. Shano was warmed with the usquebaugh, and feeling fine-like, so when a catamount screamed off in the wooded hills, and the folk around the fire shuddered and fell silent, he laughed:

"Are ye afeard of thot kitten purring in the hills?"

"Kitten, is it?" one replied. "Did ye iver meet him in the woods, he'd rip the hide from ye."





"In Mayo we kape kittens like thot around the house to scratch our backs," Shano said. "Wan good screamer from Ballyhaunus would scare him into hiding."

Just then the catamount screamed again, and Shano said: "Whist, till I show ye."

He took a deep breath and screamed back at the cat. 'Twas not much of a scream, for he was out of practice, but it blew all the coals of fire from the sheet of iron and scattered them all over the flatboat, so the entire company had to haste and douse them with water to save boat and cargo from being burned.

The captain was fair beside himself with rage. He ordered Shano to steer all night; and next morning, just after day-break, he steered close to the Ohio shore, where there was a landing. When the boat came within spittin' distance, he fetched Shano a great kick that sent him spraddling into the river. He came up, spitting mud and water, and struck out for the shore whilst the boat floated on.

**T**IMMY COSTIGAN refilled his pipe, took another small drink from my flask and puffed reflectively.

I remonstrated: "You were going to tell me about that survey line—"

"Ye're impatient," Timmy replied calmly. "'Tis a mon of few words I am, and I'm usin' a few av thim so ye'll understand thot line."

The place Shano landed (he continued after a few more puffs) was Manchester, and the year me gran'ther reached there was 1797.

'Tis no great city now, and then it was no more than a log stockade at the top of a great hill above the landing. It had blockhouses at the corners to guard

against the Indians, and inside was the meeting-house and the cabins of those who did not live in their own clearings near by. 'Twas a town built by General Nathaniel Massie, him that was one of Washington's youngest generals, and a great surveyor and landowner in the Ohio country. Massie founded Chillicothe and Bainbridge also, and mayhap a half dozen other towns. He was elected as first governor of Ohio, and refused the job because not everyone voted for him.

**I**T happened that the General was in Manchester when Shano Boards came puffing and blowing to the shore after being kicked off the flatboat. And Shano, after being given a big drink to warm him, was taken to Massie.

"Who might you be, and how did it happen you were in the river all alone?" the General asked.

"'Twor the captain's fault," said Shano. "He kicked me from behind into the river, because a wee breath av me blew the fire over the boat."

"Are you a settler come to buy land?" Massie asked.

"They tould me the land wor free," said Shano.

"Some is, and some is not. Are you a great woodsman, that you can settle on the free land?"

"Thot I am not," answered Shano, for he remembered that each time he had claimed to be a sailor or an ox-driver or a flatboatman, he had been kicked from behind.

"Are you a surveyor?" the General asked.

"I am not."

"Are you a fighter? Or a scout? Or an axman? Or a teacher? Or a preacher?" the General kept asking, and each time Shano said no, until the General finally said:

"Well, then, you must be a great hunter. The good Lord made every man for some purpose, and you are no good at anything else."

"No man in Ireland iver wor wiser about setting snares for hares and pheasants," Shano admitted. "I'm strong, too, and the voice av me is greater than thot av any mon in the world."

"What trade did you follow in Ireland?" the General asked.

Shano saw there was no use lying. "I wor a banshee, sor; the best in Ireland. And I was a good poacher, too."

"Banshee, is it?" Massie laughed. "I never heard the like."

So Shano told him of trying to scare the Duke, and how he was caught, and the General roared with laughing until the tears rolled down his cheeks.

"I can use a man who can hunt and fish and bring food to the settlement, no matter how you learned," he said. "And comes time to go surveying, you can hide from Indians the way you did from the keepers."

So Shano dwelt at Manchester and became the great hunter of the settlement. His skill at setting snares, and his cunning at slipping through the woods, grew greater as he learned the difference between hunting in the great woods and poaching in His Lordship's park. Each day at sunset, when he came within two miles of the stockade, he lifted the voice of him in a whispered yell, and the settlers knew that Shano Boards was coming, with a deer or a bear or fat partridge or turkey on the back of him.

He came to be a man of daring in the woods, trailing the Indians that came sneaking near, and bringing word of them when they moved in large parties. The friendly ones he knew well, and sometimes he sat in their tepees and ate, sharing his food with them. 'Twas skilled, too, he came to be in the making of corn liquor, and most friendly with the ones who ran the still-house.

**A** HAPPY man he was, with little thought for anyone but himself, but his pleasure lasted only till early winter, when one day a flatboat came down the river bringing supplies and new settlers. One of the newcomers asked:

"Is there a wild Irisher callin' himself Shano Boards hereabouts?"

"'Tis the name av me," said Shano boldly. "And who might ye be?"

"Have ye a castle built yet?" asked the man. "And a great estate with cattle and sheep?"

"Thot I hov not," answered Shano. "'Tis a hunter I am, and a trapper and a scout who seeks the Indians."

"Then ye'd best be gettin' them, for when I left Philadelphia, the constable's daughter, Maureen McCarthy, said to look for ye because she expected ye'd have the castle nigh built and waitin' for her."

Shano wished he hadn't talked so big. He thought of taking the first flatboat that passed and floating with it down to New Orleans. Yet at the same time he was wishing Maureen might come, then moaning for fear she might already be



"They fear the banshee," Shano said.  
"I'll hov another try."

on her way, and him with no more than a shanty to sleep in.

He sought out General Massie to tell his troubles.

"Don't be fretting yourself about that, Boards," the General said. "The young lady won't be coming over the mountains in winter."

"I'd not want to be here whin she comes," groaned Shano. "I gave her the promise of a castle, with cattle and lands, and I hov no more than me hunting-shirt and me musket."

"If she should come before spring, you'll not be here," said the General. "'Tis near time to be startin' a trip into the woods, surveying. Remember I said you'd have to go along and scout for Indians and hunt meat for the camp. If the young lady comes, she'll stay in the fort—and none the worse for your being away—until the spring brings you back."

"The Indians have gone to their lodges for the winter now, and there's little to fear if we keep close watch. I'm taking a party out soon to survey some lands for Colonel Bushrod Washington and Colonel James Butler. If we can mark out the boundaries before spring, mayhap I can persuade the colonels to send out new settlers to their lands."

"Gineral," said Shano gratefully, "ye see before ye perhaps the finest surveyor thot iver left Ireland. 'Twor me great-grandsir, Shepelaun, thot told me how his grandmammy's mammy's pappy surveyed the vale of Killarney and poured the first bucket of water to start the lakes. No doubt I inherited his knowledge of surveyin', although 'tis true that I niver hov tried it."





Shano lepped down the hill and chased after the Indians, never letting the

"I'll allow myself doubts," said the General. "Ye have a strong back and arms for swinging an ax, and you can do the hunting."

"'Tis best," Shano admitted. "'Twill be aisier facin' wild Indians than facin' Maureen whin she comes and finds no castle waitin'."

The snow was deep when they started into the wilderness, and the wind sharp. 'Twas the safest time for surveying, when bitter weather kept the Indians in their villages. Still, General Massie took no chance of being surprised when they

camped at night. He divided the party of twenty-eight into four groups. Seven men went ten rods north from the fire, seven ten rods east, and the others south and west. They scraped the snow into mounds to shelter them from the wind, laid blankets on the ground, and to keep warm, the men slept spoon-fashion, so when one man turned over all must turn.

In the morning the General sent a scout to make a wide circle around the camp, looking for Indian tracks; and not until he returned would Massie give the signal to gather at the fire.



great voice of him stop . . . his banshee wail filling the savages with fear.

The party surveyed smaller tracts first; then late in February headed up Simon Kenton's trail for the biggest job of all. They moved with caution, for even in winter the Indians used the Kenton trail, which was their great war and hunting road, a shortcut from the Scioto through the hills to the Ohio. The trace led through the gap from the Sinking Springs past the great Fort Hill, and up into the Flats.

By the time they started on the lands granted by Congress to Bushrod Washington and his friend James Butler, the

weather was changing, with warm, thawing days and warm rains followed by bitter cold. It was terrible work surveying in that weather; for when the snow softened, the men sank belly-deep in the drifts.

Food began to run short too, for deer were scarce, but Shano had learned to scrape away the snow to bare ground and set snares for the young bucks that came to eat.

One day he found two bucks in his nooses; and when he dragged the fresh meat into camp, the General was so re-



joiced that he gave Shano a flask of corn whisky to warm the heart of him.

"Perhaps it will stir you to bring in more deer tomorrow," he said. "For I can scarce spare anyone for hunting, now that we must hurry to finish. The spring rains may come any day now, and when the snow is gone, the woods will be full of Indians. There's no time for careful surveying. We'll run the lines fast, and blaze trees for markers, except at the section corners. If you come behind, make a few more blazes along the lines."

**N**EXT morning Shano started off with the heart of him light, and his body warm with the food and the liquor. He hunted long, and found only a fat turkey in one snare. Then during the afternoon, when he was following turkey tracks and watching for deer moving, he got lost in the hills between Fort Hill and Irons Mountain. With the darkness coming down fast, and the sky heavy with more snow, he saw he had followed his own tracks around and around a hillside, always coming out at the same place.

Sitting down to rest and think, Shano felt the flask in the skirt of his hunting-coat. He took a drink to warm him, and then a drink to make his eyes clearer, and a third to make his brain remember the landmarks. A temperate man Shano was, who never took a drink without a good reason—and he had many reasons that day.

The darkness fell quickly in the gorge, and Shano knew that all he could do was wait until morning and then follow his own trail back to the old warriors' road that the settlers called Kenton's Trace. So he decided to take just one more wee sip for warmth, and camp until morning in a cave in the side of a bluff. He was just putting the flask away, when he heard a sound in the gorge below him, and saw the glow of a fire.

"Ho-ho!" he said to himself. "I'm right near the camp after all, and I'll not be after lettin' thim know I was near lost." So he shouldered the turkey and started down.

He was just at the point of giving his yell to let them know he had fresh meat, when he heard a sound that made the hackles of his neck stand up from fright. 'Twas no such sound as woodsmen make, but the scream of a savage. With the boldness of the whisky in him, Shano slipped along the hillside from tree to tree until he could look down on the fire. The sight he saw there came near to lift-

ing his scalp from the head of him, with no knife needed.

There were five Shawnee braves by the fire, and near by were two of the surveyors, bound tightly to saplings. The Indians were dancing around, waving their tomahawks and yelling, and every few minutes one would rush up at the captives and make as if to bash their brains out. Their shouts filled the woods with echoes and made Shano's blood run cold, for he knew it was no quick death his friends would meet. Shano found himself shivering so that he had to take another great drink from the flask to warm his blood and steady his nerves.

Soon the liquor commenced to take hold, and Shano peeked around a tree again to watch the biggest of the Indians dance up to the captives, brandishing his hatchet. Instead of striking a head, he sunk the blade into the sapling above the head and let out the most egregious war-whoop that ever was heard in the hills.

Shano heard, and felt contempt for all Indians. "Ho-ho," he said. "And is thot the best yellin' ye can do? I'll be after showin' ye how a real mon can yell! Listen to the champion banshee av all Ireland!"

With that he took the last drink from the flask, threw back the head of him to let his Adam's-apple slide the more freely, and unloosed the great screech of all his life. 'Twas a yell that would have saved the good Saint Patrick the trouble of driving the snakes from Ireland by scarin' them all to death. And when Shano raised his voice from the bellow of a bull elk to the scream of a mad panther, 'twas like a great gale rushing through the gorge, bending the saplings and stripping the dead leaves from the old oaks.

"Thot will show thim red devils how to greet," Shano said to himself. "'Tis like the haythen know nawthin' av the banshee, but 'tis time they learned."

**D**OWN below, the Indians stood frozen in their tracks until the echoes of the scream started bouncing back from the rocks; then they dropped their tomahawks and started to run, bumping into each other as each started to go in a different way.

"They fear the banshee as good Christians do," Shano said to himself. "I'll hov another try."

He lifted his voice again, stronger and more fearsome than ever, and the savages turned and ran along the trail. Shano

## HOW THE BANSHEE CAME TO AMERICA

lepped down the hill, grabbed up one of the great stone hammers the Indians had dropped, and chased after them, never letting the great voice of him stop.

The first Indian he overtook at the banks of the creek, and Shano bashed his brains out with one mighty swing of the stone hammer. He caught the second Indian as he tried to dodge behind a boulder, and the other three raced along a deer trail up the hillside with Shano's banshee wail filling the savages with fear as he dashed along close behind them. Two more swings of the hatchet dropped the two hindmost, while the strongest one reached the very top of the hill before Shano caught and killed him.

"'Tis too bad no more is left of the dhrink. All the yellin' and runnin' has made me throat dhryer than a sooty chimney," said Shano as he stood at the top of the great ridge. "The Ginerall should give me a bit more, come mornin', for this night's worruk.

"Holy St. Bridgy!" he thought sudden-like. "'Twas forgettin' thim poor min tied up down there I was."

So he hastened down the hillside and set free the two surveyors, who were half dead from fear of the savages and of Shano's screams. They built a fire and cooked the turkey Shano had killed, then hid in a cave until morning came, lest other Indians happen along the trail.

COME morning, one of the surveyors wanted to make haste back down the trail toward home, and the other wanted to seek the General in the opposite direction, but Shano refused.

"Do we but go to the top of the ridge last night where I was," he said, "we can take a short-cut to the corner post where he'll be, and hov no risk of meetin' more savages."

Shano started out, and when he came to the place where the first Indian had fallen at the bank of the creek, he chopped a big blaze on a tree.

"We'll be after markin' the line, the same as the Ginerall tould us," he said.

"But we have no compass or quadrant," said one surveyor.

"Ye hov the chain," Shano said. "We can measure the line and mark the way we wint by blazin' the trail. Thot's what the Ginerall said to do."

They followed the path the Indians and Shano had taken, and every time they came to the body of one of the sav-

ages, Shano blazed a tree. Late in the afternoon they crossed the trail of the main party and caught up with the General, making haste toward the river.

"I'd given you all up for lost," said Massie. "Boards, you deserve the castle you promised to build. Old Bijah Long died this winter, leaving no heirs, and his cabin is empty. It shall be yours as a reward.

"I'm wishing," he added sadly, "that we had finished surveying the line over the hills before the redskins came."

"'Tis all surveyed, Ginerall darlint," said Shano. "We blazed the trail as we came, just as ye said. Mayhap 'tis a bit crooked, for the Injuns wor not very good runners, but 'tis marked."

AND thot," said Timmy Costigan, "is how me gran'ther, Shano Boards, made the line ye are after askin' about."

"'Tis a grand tale, Timothy," I said. "But you surely don't expect me to believe it."

Timmy gulped the remainder of the liquor and handed the flask back to me.

"A mon av few words I am," he repeated. "And all true words. I found the papers."

He handed me a yellowed, crackling paper, dusty and breaking with age on the folds. It was the original survey, describing the boundary between the lands of Job Pricer and James Baker, formerly the Bushrod Washington and James Butler holdings. I read:

*From a stake in the ashes of a campfire in Simon Kenton's Trace, N. 44 degrees E., sixty-three poles to a blazed ash and the body of an Indian on the banks of Baker's fork of Brush Creek; thence E. 14 degrees S., eighty and one-third poles to the body of an Indian beside a boulder on the bank of the creek; thence E. 32 degrees N. seventy poles to the bodies of two Indians and a clump of hackberry on a bench on the mountainside; thence, following the irregularities of a deer-run, 240 poles to the body of an Indian and a blazed oak-tree at the top of the ridge; thence E. 12 degrees S., 318 poles to the corner of the township line by the big spring.*

Written in faded ink at the bottom of the outline map was a footnote:

*This boundary follows the irregularities of a path locally known as the Banshee Trail.*

"The Great Knockin' Down," another adventure of our wild Irishman in pioneer America will be described by Mr. Fullerton in an early issue.





Illustrated  
by Orson  
Lowell

# South Seas

**D**R. JOHN ST. JOHN, neurologist, neuro-anatomist and well-known psychiatrist, leaned across the desk in his consulting-room and studied the young man who sat facing him.

"How long have you had this secret desire, Mr. Sanford?"

The patient shrugged his broad shoulders. He was about thirty years old, well set up, handsome, with clear gray eyes in which lurked none of the shadowy dread of the ordinary neurotic. He looked like an ex-football-player and a successful if somewhat worried stockbroker—which in fact he was.

"Oh," he said, "ever since I was a kid I've wanted to go to the South Seas. Dreamed of it, you know. The way kids do."

"Yes," said Dr. St. John.

"But it wasn't till lately—within the past few months—that the thing really took hold of me. It started as a dream. I mean, a real dream; at first it came about once a week, then every other night or so. For the past couple of weeks I've had it every night—"

"Can you describe this dream to me?"

"I can show it to you," Bill Sanford said. He took his wallet from his pocket, opened it and drew out a colored slip of paper about three inches square. This he placed on the Doctor's desk. "There it is," he said. "At least, that's the general setting of it."

Dr. St. John bent his head over the clipping. It was a lithograph of a tropical beach, with palm trees in the background and a moonlit sea breaking in a low white surf on the sand in the foreground. That was all. Yet in spite of its obvious picture-postcard quality, the small square chromo had a certain simplicity, even a certain beauty. It was captioned:

*"A typical South Sea Island beach."*

"Where did you get this, Mr. Sanford?"

"It was on the cover of a steamship folder I found in my mail one morning about three months ago. Just a travel-advertisement for a world cruise. Don't know why I saved it—but I did. I remember asking my secretary for a pair of shears; then I very carefully cut it out and put it in my wallet. I think it was that night—or shortly afterward—that I began to have my dream."

"Tell me as much about it as you can."

"Well, it always starts the same way. I'm standing under a palm tree, looking out at an empty beach bright with moonlight. Beyond is the sea, with the surf breaking and a fine silver light over everything. A wonderful light. And somewhere there's singing. Voices singing a song I don't understand. The song's wonderful, too."

"Is there—answer me frankly—a woman in your dream?"

"No." Sanford grinned suddenly. He had an engaging grin. "If there were,—if I'd taken to dreaming of some brown-skinned beauty in a sarong,—it would be easier to understand. I'd figure, in that case, that my primitive instincts were playing a trick on me—and I'd forget it. I told you that I was happily married."

**"M**ANY of my patients," said the great Doctor, "make that statement, when psychologically it isn't true. But from what you've told me, I believe you. So I think we can rule out any Freudian implications in your dream. Can you describe it further?"

"Not so clearly. You see, it rather breaks up—"

"Breaks up?"

"Into various activities—adventures. Sometimes I'm fishing on a blue lagoon—so clear that I can see the coral formations on the bottom. Sometimes I'm steering an outrigger canoe through the surf—that's exciting. Then again, I'm bathing in a fresh-water pool under a waterfall, or hunting game in a thick green jungle—or maybe just lying naked on the beach in the sun. Whatever I do," concluded Bill Sanford, as though summing up an actual experience, "it's a

# Calling

By DANA  
BURNET



Dr. St. John bent his head over the clipping. "Where did you get this, Mr. Sanford?"

man's adventure. It gives me the feeling of being a complete man. A hell of a lot more than it does to know I've got a seat on the New York Stock Exchange."

Dr. St. John sat back in his chair. He put the tips of his fingers together and looked over his pyramided hands at Bill Sanford.

"Perhaps that feeling's at the bottom of it," the Doctor said.

"I'm sure it is," Sanford answered promptly. "After all, Doctor, there's not much in civilized life that gives a man the feeling of being a man. I make money, yes. I have an attractive home—if you can call a Park Avenue apartment a home. I've got a beautiful wife and a husky young son—I do get a kick out of young Bill. But add it all up, and what does it come to? I'm just a small wheel in an enormous machine that may fall to pieces at any moment."

"True," said Dr. St. John.

"Some crackpot in Washington may throw sand into the gears tomorrow, or some dictator in Europe may decide to drop a few bombs on the head of another dictator, and—bingo!—where is Bill Sanford? He's down there somewhere in the

ruins, without a chance to save himself or his family. He can't even catch a fish for his dinner, because there aren't any fish on the Stock Exchange." Bill's grin flashed again. "At least," he added, "not the edible kind."

The Doctor smiled.

"You haven't lost your sense of humor. That removes you from the class of pathological neurotics. But it makes your problem even more serious."

"It's serious, all right," Bill Sanford said.

"Why don't you—" St. John paused, then said deliberately: "Why don't you go to the South Sea Islands? Take a trip and see—"

"That's what I'm afraid of!"

"Afraid?"

"Yes. I'm afraid that some day I'll just pack up and go. If I do—I know I'll never come back."

"WELL," said Dr. St. John, in his calm, measured voice, "why should you?"

"Because," Bill said slowly, "I happen to love my wife and child."

"Take them with you."

The young man shook his head.



"Can't be done. Dorothy wouldn't go. Not to stay, I mean. I know my wife. She's as much the product of civilization as I'm the victim of it. She was born and reared right here in New York; and to her, no other existence is possible."

"You've never mentioned your dream to her?"

"Never. She'd think I was crazy."

THE Doctor swung around in his chair and looked out the window of his office at the forest of skyscrapers that filled his view. For some time he sat with his back to Bill Sanford, gazing at those symbols of the civilization which the younger man, his patient, wanted so definitely to escape. Finally he swung back again, facing Bill.

"Mr. Sanford, I've been interested for some time in the subject of mental telepathy. I've gone into it quite thoroughly; and I'm convinced that it has some basis in scientific fact. I don't guarantee that it will work in your case; but I suggest, seriously, that you try it."

"Try?"

"Your specific problem is to persuade your wife to make this radical change in your life. If she felt as you do, you'd both be happy, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, I—I suppose so. Yes, of course."

"Very well. Then your job, as I see it, is to win her over to this—this secret desire of yours. It may sound fantastic to you, Mr. Sanford. But I've found, in twenty years of practice, that life often verges on the fantastic."

"I don't doubt that," said young Mr. Sanford rather grimly.

"You can't persuade your wife by argument or reason, because you haven't a reasonable case. But it's vital to you. Therefore I advise you to attempt to influence her by mental suggestion."

"You mean—to try to *will* Dorothy to go to the South Seas with me?"

The Doctor made a gesture.

"The human will is an unknown quantity, Mr. Sanford. So is the human mind, as far as that goes. But we do know that consciousness acts as a stimulus in some sensory impulses, and a sensory impulse is as real as an electrical current. There's a chance that one mind may influence another, just as one pole in an electrical field influences the opposite pole in that field. Do you understand the analogy?"

"Not very well, Doctor—frankly. I'd rather you told me what to do."

"All right. When you go home tonight, instead of suppressing this dream

of yours, I want you to think of it consciously. Make a mental effort to wish that your wife might share it with you. Don't speak of it in any way, but concentrate on the wish. Do this for a few minutes every night, at the same time each night, and keep it up for a month, at least."

Bill Sanford's face was a study in skepticism.

"It sounds screwy," he blurted out.

The Doctor laughed.

"It does. But so does the fact that a man's whole life may be affected by a colored picture on a travel-folder. It won't hurt to try the experiment."

Bill rose and held out his hand to the Doctor.

"I'll try it," he said. "What have I got to lose? This thing's got to be settled one way or another."

Five minutes after his patient had gone, Dr. St. John still sat staring at the small, garish clipping that made a fragmentary blot of color on his immaculately polished desk. His lean, sensitive face, triangularly drawn from the broad brow to the neat Vandyke beard, took on a curious expression. It was the look of a man of forty who, after spending half his life dealing with human idiosyncrasies, still found in their vagaries an endless source of wonder.

"Extraordinary!" he murmured to himself; and then he reached for his desk telephone.

SOME three weeks later, Bill Sanford appeared again in Dr. St. John's office. He came in almost running. He looked, now, less like a successful stockbroker than a man who has seen a ghost.

"Doctor!" he exclaimed at once. "It's happened! I put it over—and it's terrible. I'm worried almost out of my mind."

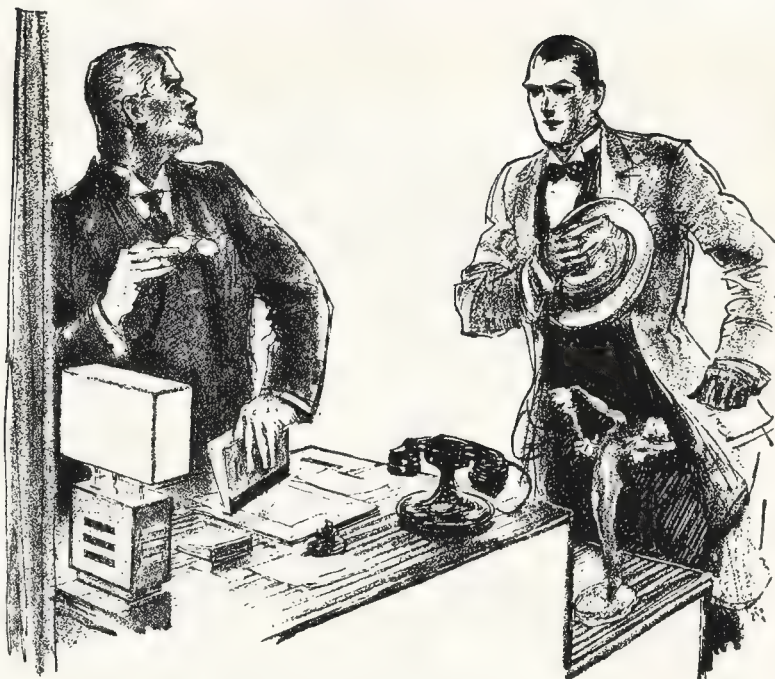
"Sit down, Mr. Sanford."

"I can't sit down! I tell you, I've hypnotized Dorothy. I did what you told me—every night I concentrated on wishing that she'd go to the South Seas with me—and this morning, just as I was leaving the house—"

"Yes?"

"She suddenly came out with it. She said she supposed I'd think she was crazy, but that somehow she'd got the idea of going to live on an island far away from civilization. An island with palm trees and a beach, with the sea,"—here Bill stopped and gulped,—“with the sea breaking on the sand in the moonlight. Then

"Doctor!" he exclaimed. "I put it over—and it's terrible; I'm worried almost out of my mind. I've hypnotized Dorothy!"



she went on and—my God, Doctor!—it was my dream almost to the last detail."

"Then the experiment worked. That's splendid!"

"Splendid? It's awful! How can we leave New York? Young Bill's just getting started in school; I've got my business here; Dorothy has her friends, her charities, her—her bridge club—"

Dr. St. John lifted his hand.

"Just a moment, Mr. Sanford. Am I to understand that you've changed your mind about all this?"

"Changed my—" Bill stopped, and his jaw dropped. Then he grinned rather feebly at the other. "That's right," he said. "That's right, I have! I was so upset when Dorothy blew up this morning—it was just as if she'd blown up and come down a different woman—that I didn't realize I'd changed. But I have. I don't want to go to the South Sea Islands. I don't want to go anywhere but to the office—and home. It was just an obsession I had—a cock-eyed obsession—and believe me, I'm cured."

"You're quite sure you're cured? Permanently?"

"I'm dead sure. But now—don't you see? I've got to turn around and cure Dorothy. . . . And you've got to tell me how!"

The Doctor rose and put his hand on the younger man's shoulder.

"Don't worry about that, Mr. Sanford. I only hope you'll forgive me for the trick I played on you."

"Trick? What—"

"The first time you came to see me, directly after you'd left the office, I telephoned your wife and told her the whole story. I advised her exactly what to do. Apparently she's done it with great success. If I were you, I'd go home now and tell her that you love her. Also I'd not forget to take her some flowers."

Bill Sanford stared at the psychiatrist. The younger man's eyes were glazed. He tugged at his tie, as though it were choking him. He opened his mouth, closed it; then said hoarsely: "Please send your bill to my office."

And then he went out, almost running.

Twenty-four hours later young Bill Sanford, successful stockbroker and happily married man, found a note from Dr. St. John in his morning mail. He opened it rather apprehensively—and read:

*Dear Mr. Sanford:*

*There will be no charge for my services in your case. First, because I have all the money I need, and am retiring from practice as of today. Second, because you were the cause of demonstrating to me a hypothesis in which I have long been interested—namely, whether there is any scientific truth in mental suggestion.*

*I am sure now that there is. For after gazing for three weeks at the little colored lithograph you left on my desk, I have succumbed completely to its exotic charm. I am leaving New York for good. I sail tomorrow—for the South Sea Islands.*

*Good luck and God bless you,*

*John St. John.*



# Two Swordsmen of Gascony



*Not only Molière, but Cyrano and D'Artaignan (yes, real historical characters, and contemporaries) figure in this vivid story—the eighth in "The World Was Their Stage."*

**N**OT a shot has been fired, not a man has been killed, for three days!" said the young man who was furbishing his sword. "And they call this war!"

"When it rains in Flanders, it rains," exclaimed one of the others, with a rousing Gascon oath. "Ha, comrades! Our youngster pines for the bloody fray! Your first campaign, M. d'Artaignan? Take it easy, *mon ami*, take it easy and be thankful!"

Artaignan, an angry flash in his eye, regarded the speaker, met only a wide, jovial grin, and dismissed his choler. It was no time to be angry or start quarrels; the damned rain, he told himself, took the heart out of anger as it took the heart out of war.

He reached for his wide hat and cloak, drew up his boot-tops and buckled them

"A mountebank's daughter?" murmured Bergerac. "God forbid! Rather, a princess!"



"Not at all, comrade," declared Artagnan.  
"An angel fresh from the heavenly choir."

By  
**H. BEDFORD-JONES**

Pen drawings by  
John Richard Flanagan

around his legs, and stepped out of the miserable cowed in which he and his companions were quartered. To right and left were other sheds, tents, wagons in pairs with canvas stretched between—anything and everything that would protect the troops from the weather.

Gloomily, Artagnan stamped along. He was not tall, but was lithe and admirably well-knit. A tiny mustache and Vandyke attempted vainly to age his unlined and youthful features; he had the eager zest of a boy, the impulsive explosiveness of a true Gascon.

Here all France had come to war—and it rained! The lines of artillery were silent. Through the drizzle appeared the walls and spires of Arras. Completely invested and cut off from relief though they were, the Spanish, German and Flemish troops that held Arras for the





Hapsburgs fought stubbornly on; it was the summer of 1640.

Artaignan eyed the gray walls, eyed his own front lines. These were occupied by the flower of the French army—the regiment of Conti and the various companies of the Guards, the volunteer nobles who had no discipline whatever, hot pride of birth, and the ability to fight like demons. Certain of these companies were composed exclusively of Gascon gentlemen.

Suddenly Artaignan halted, turned; his nostrils quivered like the nose of a dog scenting game. A sound had reached his ear. It came again. It was the slithering clash of sword upon sword, accompanied by low oaths and gusty words. He glanced around, questioningly.

Now occupied by the headquarters staff, a straggling hamlet had nestled here under the city walls. The ears of the young Gascon led him between two cabins to an enclosure at the rear, bounded by a cattle-shed and a manure pile; here he came upon a dozen men standing and watching two of their number at sword-

play. Artaignan's face fell when he saw it was no duel. He was about to turn away, when an amazing thing caught his attention.

The two men were fencing with naked blades. One of the two was a grizzled, masterly man; the other, activated by an incredible energy and a dazzling skill, was much younger, with scarred features, an enormous hooked nose, and dark liquid eyes that fairly flashed fire. What took Artaignan's eye was that this younger man was talking as he fenced—talking, jesting, laughing, and yet maintaining a display of swordsmanship that was positively miraculous. He could have killed his opponent easily, had he wished.

"Pardieu!" The older man sprang back. "God save me from ever facing you in earnest, Bergerac! I've had enough exercise for the day."

Bergerac turned, laughing. He caught the gaping, admiring gaze of Artaignan; for a moment the two looked at each other. Then a hand clapped Artaignan on the shoulder. It was Captain Duret de Montchenin, of the regiment of Conti, whom he had met recently.

"*Holà*, comrades!" cried the officer. "Allow me to present a true Gascon from the company of M. des Essarts. . . . M. d'Artaignan, making his first campaign with us!"

Flushed and eager, Artaignan was presented, was welcomed; Gascon voices rose high; the rich Gascon accent beat upon the air. Highest and richest was the voice of the swordsman, ringing out his own high-sounding titles—Hercule Savinien de Cyrano de Bergerac—embracing Artaignan with garlicky gusto, hurling oaths to the sky, and fancy Gascon jests at those around.

THE rain had died to a faint drizzle. Bergerac donned his plumed hat, adjusted the scarf that was the only uniform of the Guards, and passed his arm through that of Artaignan.

"Come along—a drink to friendship and destiny! Until this cursed weather clears up, we can't expect any exchange of arms with those Germans; it's weather for wine, and I know where to find wine. How old are you, my friend?"

"Twenty-one," said Artaignan, who was actually just eighteen.

"Precisely my own age! Admirable! Au revoir, gentlemen! We go to seek adventure!"

The two swung off together, arm in arm, Artaignan charmed by this atten-

tion from so notable a swordsman. They talked as only Gascons can; rather, Bergerac did the talking, for his tongue ran madly. He talked, naturally, of himself, and Artaignan learned all about him.

Bergerac mourned only one thing: he had never been the principal in a duel, although he had frequently served as second—hence, his scars. He was in the company of M. de Carbon Casteljalous, every man of which was a redoubtable Gascon; he had received a bullet through the body at the siege of Mouzon; he had attended the College of Beauvais; he bragged of love and fight; he was a poet, but he intended to write more serious things and had even started a fantastic romance about a visit to the moon.

**S**WAGGERING into a canteen, they roared for wine. Both were in funds. Bottle after bottle was emptied; Artaignan, who drank with caution, was amazed at the capacity of Bergerac. He had little to tell of himself, being newly come to Paris from the south, and nothing at all to brag about; but he had an imagination.

The little chateau of the Batz family at Lupiac—nowhere near Artaignan of the Montesquiou family—grew and grew until Bergerac, who had never seen the town of Bergerac, stared with his large eyes bulging. The silver a-clang in Artaignan's pocket became thick *louis d'or* in endless quantity. Bergerac swallowed hard and changed the subject.

"What tragedy is this siege! That is, for a poet. Did I tell you I was a poet?"

"Yes," said Artaignan. "Why is this siege tragic? I think it's superb! All the great regiments, the great soldiers, the great men, of France are gathered here—"

"And not one of them will be remembered for it." Bergerac wagged a long finger before his hooked nose. "Comrade, look at the two of us: a great man like you, destined to become a marshal of France, a soldier with an eye of steel—and me."

"The greatest swordsman in the army, I think," said Artaignan with simple naïveté.

Bergerac flushed with pleasure at the compliment, but shook his head.

"No, comrade; I am a poet, a writer, a satirist. I shall write books. They shall make me famous. I shall be remembered in France, you will be remembered, as having been here at the siege of Arras! The others, great men today, will



Bergerac turned, laughing. He caught the admiring gaze of Artaignan.

be forgotten by posterity. I know a great man when I see one. You shall become famous, I tell you!"

Artaignan was astonished. "You, a superb swordsman, intend to become a writer?"

"Aye." Bergerac emptied his bottle and called for another. "I'll impart you a secret. I swagger; I second others in duels; I have no quarrels of my own—why? Regard this nose, my friend. I'm a sensitive man; a look, a word, wounds me to the quick. So I force myself to become an incomparable swordsman. I kill poor devils to build up a reputation. I am first in every assault on the walls yonder. . . . Do I hate those Spaniards and Germans? Not I. Why, I detest fighting! But you see, I am doomed to it. Later, I shall leave the army and write books, and be happy. And we, you and I, shall be the only men remembered by France as having taken part in the siege of Arras!"



"Your pardon, monsieur," spoke up a quiet voice. "What you say is quite true; but a third name will, I am positive, be mentioned with yours."

The two turned. Artaignan started to speak, checked himself. The young man

brown, mobile face, the deep and penetrating eyes, startled him.

"Ha!" exclaimed Bergerac. "Who can rank with a poet and a soldier, fellow?"

The young man smiled. He wore a black suit tricked out with gold lace, a black coat, a black hat with black plume.

"I have two personalities, gentlemen," he said, his voice richly mellow. "I am the grand equerry, at the moment, of the great and inimitable Doctor Sarasin, a renowned physician and student of the



**"The name of Molière, comrades, shall be linked with yours in fame."**

who had entered unobserved, and who stood close to them, was both remarkable and impressive, to his quick eye.

Not, perhaps, to an older eye; it is an odd fact that youth often perceives in youth all the promise of the future. In this bronzed and hearty young fellow an older man might have seen only a queerly attired, fantastic youngster. Artaignan, with quick prescience, beheld a youth of eighteen who had the manners and knowledge and presence of a man of thirty; the

Grand Magic, who will cure the ills of your body and tell you the past, present and future. He, with his daughter and his equipage, is now outside."

"The devil!" ejaculated Bergerac. "Is this your path to fame?"

"No. Having guided the eminent Doctor here, I now leave him and return to my own affairs at Amiens." The visitor

## TWO SWORDSMEN OF GASCONY

bowed, half mockingly. "I am, gentlemen, neither a Gascon nor a noble. I am a strolling player, at your service; an actor, a capable actor, but one who also can write a comedy, a tragedy, a bit of farce, what you like! And when next you hear of me, Messieurs of the Guards, I shall have a great play performed at Paris itself. I shall be a writer of comedies at which the whole world shall laugh!"

"You seem to know the future yourself," said Bergerac.

The other bowed again.

"Thank you. I do. At least, I know my own future!"

"I believe you!" exclaimed Artaignan with energy. He spoke impulsively;

The young man, pausing in the doorway, flung them a laughing look.

"The name of Molière, comrades. Adieu!" With this reply, he was gone.

Bergerac, laughing, quaffed his wine. "A droll fellow, that!"



something in those mobile features moved and spurred him. "Monsieur, join us in a bottle of wine now, and share our future! A marshal of France, a poet and writer of books, a writer of plays to shake the world's belly with laughter—excellent!"

"Thank you, but I must leave you and be off." The other turned to the door.

Bergerac halted him with a sudden bellow.

"Stop! Who the devil are you? What name shall be linked with ours in fame?"

"Rather, a man who may well fulfill his boast," asserted Artaignan gravely. "Come, let's step out and have a look at this remarkable Doctor Sarasin. Not to mention his daughter."

"*Pardieu!* Let us see the daughter, by all means!" cried Bergerac.

Together they stepped to the doorway, just in time to see young Molière, astride a saddled horse, go spurring away with a slap-dash of mud and water. Across from the canteen, beside the ruins of a burned cabin, the equipage of the Doctor



was drawn up, and the great man himself was unhitching two horses from a caravan or wagon that was like a small house on wheels, with steps and a door at the rear and windows at the sides.

The two exchanged a glance, caught up their hats to fend off the drizzle, and were out on the instant. Not because of the eminent physician, but because of the charming face and figure descending the steps to help with the horses.

"A mountebank's daughter?" murmured Bergerac. "God forbid! Rather, a princess!"

"Not at all, comrade," declared Artaignan, loudly enough to be overheard. "Rather, an angel freshly come from the heavenly choir!"

The young woman turned, smiling, a light in her eye that set Bergerac to twisting his mustache, and Artaignan to controlling a racing pulse. She was adorable. Bergerac became poetical, even rhapsodic; but Artaignan, who was of a somewhat calculating nature, tempered his adoration with a slight—very slight—critical leaven. She was almost too perfect, he reflected; it was hard to believe she was true.

DR. SARASIN joined them, invited them into the dry warmth of the caravan, which was cramped but neat and clean, and procured wine from the canteen.

The eminent physician, who followed the example of the great Nostradamus in combining with his healing abilities a certain degree of astrology and magic, was an expansive fellow who talked without urging. So did Bergerac, preening himself splendidly. Artaignan and Henriette, as the young woman was named, said very little; but by means of looks alone, Artaignan flattered himself that they had reached a perfect understanding before the visit ended.

Sarasin, a strapping, handsome man of extremely impressive demeanor, intended to have no clients about the caravan, and said so frankly. He purposed going about the camp with his satchel of vials and phylacteries, while Henriette remained here. This position within the purloins of headquarters offered her any needed protection; but she was, as Sarasin seemed confident, entirely able to take care of herself.

Before leaving, Bergerac expressed a desire to become acquainted with the Doctor's wizardry.

Sarasin laughed and shook his head.

"Messieurs, to be quite frank about it, that is my daughter's share in the business. I tell you this as friends, confidentially. To others, to the world in general, I am of course the great Sarasin, and I can prate learnedly of all the dark masters; but I depend on her to do the work in this respect. She has a natural gift which is marvelous! Will you tell these gentlemen something of their future, Henriette?"

"Not now, Father. I'm tired," said the girl, with a shake of the head. "Shall we say tomorrow, or tomorrow evening?"

"As you prefer, mademoiselle," Bergerac rejoined. "Tomorrow evening, by all means!"

"Come, then, at ten o'clock, when the world is quiet," she said, with so ravishing a smile that Bergerac was overjoyed.

Sarasin questioned them about the disposition of the headquarters staff. He intended to spend this evening, and every evening, presenting his letters of introduction and seeking out nobles and captains; as he said, between eight and midnight a man could better establish himself in the confidence of great men, than in a dozen working-days. During the afternoons he would visit the wounded with his sovereign healing balms.

Artaignan reflected—strictly within himself—that to any enterprising young man this general arrangement should prove providential. In leaving, he did not imitate the bows and flourishes and oratory of Bergerac; instead, he stooped to kiss the hand of Henriette and murmured two words under his breath:

"*Nine tonight.*"

STEADILY the rain fell; Sarasin had predicted that it would continue for the next day or two. As the two young men splashed back toward their billets, Bergerac was in ecstasies. He was already rhyming a sonnet to Henriette.

"When we see her tomorrow night, it will be finished," he declared. "Comrade, is she not a living marvel? Saw you ever such wise and witching eyes, such wit and beauty?"

"Frequently," replied Artaignan. "She's pretty enough, in a way; but I don't find her interesting. The father is probably some mountebank from the Pont Neuf, working the provinces; and the girl is a trifle too wise."

"*Mordious!*" Bergerac mouthed, rolling Gascon oaths. "You're inhuman, an anchorite, a cold, sparkless, flabby caricature of manhood. How can you look up-

on her, and not fly into raptures! I'll work on the sonnet this evening, polish it tomorrow, and you'll see its effect tomorrow night."

"Not I." Artaignan affected to stifle a yawn. "You'll keep the appointment; I have more important things to do."

Bergerac rolled his eyes, twisted his mustache and swore anew; he was delighted at this attitude on the part of his new friend.

At nine that night the rain was pitching down steadily once more. Sarasin was gone. The caravan was dark, but to Artaignan's cautious tap the door opened, to show candlelight. He entered; the door closed behind him; and he was speechless with astonishment.

**H**ENRIETTE, yes—but what a Henriette! No laughing bourgeois girl; but a fine lady, garbed in the most magnificent silks, sparkling with jewels. He was not sure that the gems were real, but the effect was the same.

"Here, as at our chateau near Strasbourg, I can be myself in the evenings," she said. "My father was ennobled, you know, by the Elector. It pleases him to travel in this manner; it pleases me to pretend, during the daytime, that I'm a simple peasant girl. But I am not."

The only immediate effect this had upon Artaignan was to redouble his ardor; and when his calculation yielded to ardor, Artaignan was irresistible. At the moment, he believed all she said; nor was she averse to proving her regard for him.

When Artaignan recollected the young actor Molière, with a stab of jealousy, she laughed lightly and told of meeting the actor in Amiens, where a company of strolling players were engaged. Molière had undertaken to guide her and her father here, being well acquainted with Arras; that was all. Entirely all, as she avowed, and sealed the avowal with a lingering kiss that ended upon an abrupt and startled separation.

Sloshing steps outside, a hand rattling the lock. Then Dr. Sarasin entered. He seemed to find nothing singular in the situation, but rid himself of his wet cloak and hat, and with great satisfaction recounted how headquarters had made him welcome. Artaignan took his leave; and as he pressed the hand of Henriette, inquired when he might see her again.

"Your friend comes at ten tomorrow evening," she said, smiling. "You come at nine; if you like, I'll tell your fortune, Monsieur."

The look that accompanied these words sent him away walking on air, despite all the sloshing mud and the wet weather.

Morning, and guard-duty in the rain, rather sobered his ardent reflections. There must be, he felt, something strangely amiss with this father and daughter; however, why worry over the kindness of destiny? She was beautiful; she was kind; she hungered for him as he did for her, and nothing else mattered.

Bergerac came seeking him, in the afternoon, and recited his sonnet with gusto as he raved about Henriette. He uttered a thousand extravagances in his boisterous joviality, then proposed a bout at fencing. Artaignan, nothing loath, accompanied him to shelter of the nearest shed; the floor was cleared, and they fell to with rapiers.

Artaignan, on the previous day, had noted that in attack Bergerac was superb beyond compare, gifted with a fiery élan before which nothing could stand; he himself, therefore, took the offensive at the start, and kept it. Each time Bergerac began an attack, he broke it up and forced the other to the defensive again. In vain Bergerac raged; this young guardsman, who certainly lacked science, had a wrist of sheer steel and an uncanny ability to divine an opponent's weakness. And never once was Bergerac permitted to sweep into his magnificent offense; his ferocity was discounted before it began.

**T**IME and again the gathered guardsmen broke into applause. Artaignan himself was amazed by his own efforts. Just as it seemed that one or the other must fall victim to these superhuman exertions, a sharp voice sounded. The two separated. Artaignan, wiping the sweat from his eyes, saw M. des Essarts.

"Messieurs!" exclaimed the Captain. "Orders, if you please: An hour before dawn, you will take over the advanced trenches. Provided the rain has ceased, as is foretold, the cannon will begin to talk at dawn; an hour later we shall have the honor of leading an assault, which may take the enemy by surprise."

Cheers greeted this announcement. Artaignan and Bergerac saluted and embraced, congratulating each other warmly. Bergerac, finding that his own guard company was not included in next morning's operations, obtained permission from M. des Essarts to fight beside Artaignan. Then Artaignan took him aside.

"Comrade, this means a short night's rest. I advise you to let the young wom-





an of the caravan alone this evening; postpone your appointment."

"The devil! Tomorrow night I may be dead!" Bergerac burst into laughter. "Postpone? Not I! But you should come with me tonight, Artaignan, hear me read her the sonnet, and watch her eyes fill with tears!"

"Thanks; I might become envious. And remember, she tells your fortune! It might be embarrassing if witnesses were present—eh?"

He winked significantly. Bergerac roared again, thumped him on the back, and they went off in search of wine.

That evening, the rain ceased and the stars began to show. The artillery fell to work removing tarpaulins and cleaning guns; the powder was broken out of its dry storage. The whole French camp became animated and expectant.

**B**UT Artaignan, at nine of the clock was admitted into the narrow quarters of the caravan, and again surprise shook him.

Henriette was alone as before; her greeting was warm, her lips were inviting—but no longer was she the great lady. Flanders poppies were braided into her

dark hair; a necklace of gold coins clinked over her bosom; she wore fluttering gay-hued silks; gold rings danced in her ears; jewels flashed on her fingers. At Artaignan's expression, a laugh chimed on her lips and her eyes flashed with impish merriment.

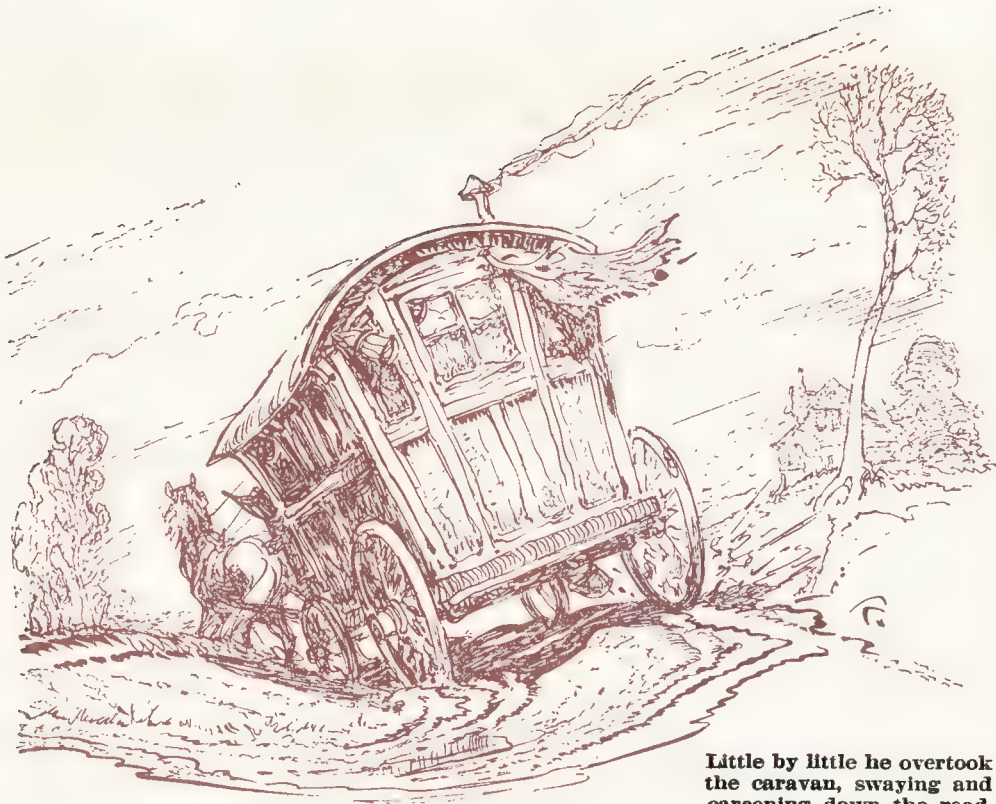
"Who but a gypsy could tell the fortunes of warriors, my hero?" she cried. "I make a very good gypsy, they all tell me."

"My word, you're marvelous!" broke out Artaignan. "You've never been so beautiful, never! Henriette, I adore you!" Then he remembered the three lanterns outside, like a triangle, above the entrance. "Why burn three lanterns, by the way? It's a waste."

"My father's orders," she said with a shrug. "How should I know? Look at our pretty things; we had a number of nobles from headquarters here this afternoon."

Artaignan looked around. Wine, and silver goblets, a huge silver holder for the candles; across one end of the space, behind the seats of the driver that let down to serve as couches, was stretched a tapestry. He turned from all this to the girl.

She liked him; she was sincere; her lips told him there was no falseness in her heart. But presently she drew away from him, seized an immense kerchief of red-



Little by little he overtook the caravan, swaying and careening down the road.

and-yellow silk, and knotted it about her head.

"Let me tell your fortune now, while I am in the mood, before your kisses make me forget all my cunning!" she exclaimed.

Artaignan laughed. "I'd sooner hear your own fortune, lovely one! There's mystery about you, about your father, about your presence here—mystery! What does it mean?"

"But I've told you!" She drew up a stool and seated herself at his feet. "Come, your hand! You know all about us; now let me discover about you. . . . Ah! Ah! This is terrible—you are inconstant and fickle!"

SHE looked up, met his eyes, and broke into gay laughter. Then, grave again, she searched his hand. Her lovely eyes widened.

"Danger! I see danger to you, tomorrow, an hour after dawn!" came her voice. "You will be in peril; be careful, be careful! Ah, what a career I see for you—destiny like an arrow—wars and intrigues—and women. Great people around you, princes and kings—"

"Come closer to the mark," broke in Artaignan, half mockingly. "What is my age?"

"Your age? Eighteen; can that be true? You seem so much older."

She glanced up. Artaignan bit his lip with youthful mortification, and nodded mutely.

"And your name?" She searched his palm anew. "Strange! It is not Artaignan at all. It is Batz. Charles de Batz."

Artaignan jerked his hand away angrily. What the devil! This girl must indeed have some uncanny power! Then, before he could speak, came interruption—a fist at the door, the voice of Bergerac outside.

"Name of the devil!" Artaignan leaped up. "He came ahead of his time!"

Henriette laughed softly. "He'll not stay long, I promise! Here, quickly!"

She was holding aside a corner of the tapestry at the end of the room. Artaignan, with a joyous burst of relief, caught up hat and cloak and slid into the space behind the tapestry; it fell before him.

He was there a long while. He began to suspect that she was deliberately prolonging the scene.

Bergerac, he of the great nose, was in magnificent form. He declaimed; he bragged; he swaggered; he became a poet of melting voice and real charm. When he read over the sonnet he had composed, even the listening Artaignan was amazed by the beauty of the imagery and sentiment.

"But I must tell your fortune!" broke in Henriette. "Sit here, my hero; let me



sit at your knee—no, your other hand! That's right."

Bergerac uttered some jest, which she cut short.

"This is strange—strange!" Her voice, to Artaignan, was startled. "Why, you have never seen Gascony in your life, my friend! Your very name—ah! It's not Bergerac at all! I see the name of Cyrano, Savinien de Cyrano—a fish-market in Paris—"

An outraged bellow from Bergerac, then insistence from Henriette, left Artaignan convulsed with wild mirth. Gascon? The swordsman was no more a noble Gascon than he was a Dutchman! All his swaggering and loud accent were pretense; a fish-market in Paris, forsooth! But how the devil did Henriette know this, except by witchcraft?

**S**UDDENLY a dead silence fell. Artaignan, listening, heard nothing; until, abruptly, close by Bergerac's voice and step sounded.

"Odd, very odd indeed! One sees odd things here in Flanders—but never before have I seen tapestry with feet, booted feet!"

In swift horror Artaignan glanced down—but too late! The tapestry was stripped aside; he was face to face with Bergerac. Even in this instant of crisis, he was mystified; he could have sworn that his feet were well behind the tapestry.

What followed was, on Artaignan's part, extremely fast thinking; never had his cool calculation served him better. Bergerac, his face suffused with passion, quite lost his head; but Henriette, despite her assumption of terror, did not. Nor did Artaignan, who saw that one wrong word would drive the mortified Bergerac to extremes. And he had no desire to face the rapier of an enraged Cyrano, now or later.

"My dear Bergerac!" he exclaimed with his charming boyish smile, as soon as he could get in a word. "I confess I hid myself in here in order to have the gratification of hearing your admirable sonnet delivered as only you could deliver it. Upon my word, it was most sublime!"

Bergerac stared and gulped. Artaignan, with a wave of the hand, continued:

"As to all that nonsense our pretty friend told you, forget it! Absurd! Am I not a Gascon myself? Have I not been in the town of Bergerac a score of times? Why, she even tried to tell me that my

name was not Artaignan. . . . Yes, upon my honor!"

Bergerac's jaw fell. His injured vanity was appeased; then Henriette struck in:

"Gentlemen, gentlemen! Pardon my ill-advised nonsense, I beg of you. M. de Bergerac, will you permit me to make amends?"

Bergerac, utterly at a loss, his ready tongue for once silenced, did not know what to think. Artaignan, catching one look from her, held his peace and waited. She caught up Bergerac's wide plumed hat, took the big gaudy silk kerchief from her head, and knotted it about the crown and plume of the hat.

"There!" she exclaimed, eying it with satisfaction and turning to Bergerac. "My gage for my most noble knight! Before the attack begins tomorrow, leave the lines and go toward the city gate, with a friend or two. They will send out an equal number to meet you; it has been done every day. Fight them, vanquish them—and come back to me! Will you do this? Will you pledge your bravery, your sword, your skill, for your lady?"

Bergerac's eyes flew wide. He took fire instantly; all the romantic attributes of his nature were kindled. It was true that such challenges from one side were usually met from the other side.

"I will proclaim Henriette the most beautiful demoiselle in all the world!" he cried, kissing the fingers of the girl. "I'll plant your gage on the walls of Arras; I'll sing of it in the estates and empires of the moon, in the castles of the sun—"

"But don't approach the city gates alone, or you might get shot," broke in Artaignan. "Have a companion, one at least. May I offer myself for that honor, Monsieur de Bergerac?"

**B**ERGERAC turned to him, embraced him in delight, and vowed eternal brotherhood.

"I see you're a very lucky man in love," went on Artaignan, catching the eye of Henriette and winking at her. "You'd better get to rest, comrade; I'll join you presently. Most unfortunately, I'm compelled to await the return of good Dr. Sarasin, having a message for him from M. des Essarts."

Henriette took Bergerac's hand and turned him to the doorway. †

"Come, monsieur, help me take down two of those lanterns," she said. "Be-

sides, I have a last word for your ear alone."

Blushing adorably, she led him outside and closed the door.

Artaignan eyed Henriette critically as she reëntered, bearing two of the lanterns, extinguished. Once again he wondered, why those three lanterns?

She turned to him, radiant. "So, he's gone. I told you he'd not stay long!"

"Apparently you made him happy," said Artaignan. She came close to him, her lovely face suddenly earnest.

"Why not? Yes, I sent him away happy, that you might remain. And you reproach me for it! You, for whose sake I have done so much!"

"Reproach you? Heaven forbid!" cried Artaignan, and caught her hand. Everything fled out of his mind except her loveliness, her closeness, her waiting lips and their slow inviting smile.

**I**N the chill grayness of dawn the wet earth was beginning to steam. The advanced trenches were astir; stoups of wine and loaves of bread were passed about; weapons were readied; cannon, to right and left, began to vomit smoke and thunder. Supporting troops were gathered for the assault.

"Time!" exclaimed Bergerac, and leaped to the breastworks and beyond. Artaignan was after him instantly. They ignored the exclamations, the angry orders from the rear; discipline scarcely existed for the Guards companies.

"Beautiful sunlight!" exclaimed Bergerac, cocking his hat over one ear. Artaignan glanced at the kerchief's bright patch of color.

"I'm glad I'm not wearing that gage of love," he said dryly. "It'll make you a superb target if some muskets open on us!"

"Nonsense! We're the heroes of the army this minute," bragged the other, strutting like a lord. He glanced around. "Ha! Look, comrade! One can see the caravan from here!"

His unuttered thought, reflected Artaignan, probably was that Henriette could see them. He turned, his eye sweeping along the lines behind. Yes, there were the headquarters tents and cabins, on slightly higher ground. The caravan was in plain sight.

"Hello!" Artaignan halted suddenly. A startling supposition shot into his mind; he began to think fast. "Bergerac! How did she know last night there was to be an attack this morning?"

"You no doubt told her. And it was no secret."

"I told her nothing! And it was strange how you discovered me, behind that tapestry."

"I, discover you?" Bergerac began to laugh heartily. A musket-shot, and another, from the walls ahead, and the whine of bullets, failed to check his laughter. "Comrade, I'll be honest; she pointed out your boot to me."

"The devil!" Alarm beat at Artaignan's brain. "She wanted you to find me, eh? She had that damned kerchief all ready—why? She had planned this excursion of ours—eh? I tell you, Bergerac, there's something very singular about all this!"

"Plague take it! Listen!" Bergerac swore heartily. The trill of bugles reached them; drums began to roll; shout upon shout pealed from the lines. "The attack! Ahead of time! We've no chance now to issue any challenge. . . . Look! Here they come behind us—quickly, comrade! At least, we'll lead the assault."

Musketry banged out; cannon thundered; powder-smoke drifted in a thick mist. But Artaignan recollected those three lanterns. . . . A signal to the city? And the Sarasins were from Strasbourg, she had said, therefore were German by origin. What was behind it all?

**H**IS brain ceased to ask questions, as the yelling men caught up, and he struck into a run to keep in the lead, beside Bergerac. The attack was on, well ahead of the time set. . . . It was on, it was surging at the walls and gate. . . . It was smashed and shivered and broken to pieces. Instead of being surprised, the enemy were in readiness. A frightful hail of cannonballs, of musketry, of every imaginable sort of missile, was poured into the assailants.

The gay kerchief guided Artaignan to the fallen figure. His first thought was that Bergerac was dead; blood was gushing from his throat, torn by a bullet. Kneeling, Artaignan saw that the jugular was not cut. There was a chance. While balls whistled and screamed around, he improvised a hasty bandage, called other men to his aid, and they carried Bergerac back to the lines, his hat and the gay kerchief still jammed on his head.

Once there, Artaignan got hold of a surgeon; Bergerac had been laid beside one of the cooking-fires. The surgeon examined him and shrugged.



"He may live; a near thing. I'll do what I can for him. Ha—look out for his hat, there. It's almost afire!"

Artaignan seized the hat, which was close to the blaze. His eyes fell on the kerchief; for an instant he froze in every nerve. That kerchief! Upon the gay silk, he saw written words appearing; then they faded and were gone. The truth flashed upon him; secret writing, made visible by the heat! He held the kerchief above the fire again, read something of that writing, enough to show that his worst suspicions were true. Then, cramming the kerchief under his jacket, he was gone at a wild run.

He came charging up to the burned cabin, and halted, staring. The caravan was gone, completely gone! Before the canteen was a soldier holding two saddled horses. Artaignan turned to him.

"That van—where is it? When did it go?"

"Oh, the caravan!" The soldier laughed. "A few minutes ago, monsieur; the driver was in haste. I directed him on the Amiens road—"

With one leap, Artaignan was in the saddle of the nearer horse. The animal plunged, the soldier was knocked aside; next minute, the young man was dashing through the camp like a madman.

OUT of the camp at last, loud shouts and trouble behind, and ahead a lurching object on the road. Little by little he overtook it—the caravan, swaying and careening wildly, its two horses at gallop. Artaignan gained, came abreast of it. He caught sight of Doctor Sarasin, with white contorted face, at the reins. Sarasin lifted a pistol and the weapon exploded. Artaignan's hat went with the bullet; but that instant of distraction had terrible consequences. The reins were loosened, the horses plunged frantically at the pistol-shot; as they veered, the ungainly equipage careened; smashed sideways into the poplars alongside the road, and piled up in wreckage.

Screams came from the interior of the caravan. Artaignan, dismounting, flung himself at the splintered ruins. A hand showed, a face, a head. . . . It was Henriette. He caught hold of her, helped extricate her, dragged her out. Trembling, unhurt but overcome by terror, she looked him in the face and, with a low cry, pitched forward in a dead faint.

He left her and turned to Sarasin. The eminent doctor, pitched from the wagon

seat and trampled by the frantic horses, was a mass of mud and blood. He opened his eyes, as Artaignan wiped his face clear; he was dying.

"So, you scoundrel!" exclaimed Artaignan, in mingled pity and anger. "A spy for the enemy, eh? You and your daughter, both spies!"

"Not my daughter," Sarasin said faintly, between convulsive gasps. Death was in his throat, in his eyes. "Actress—great talent—both of us from Strasbourg—doing our best—our best to help—"

He groaned, and his voice died. A snarl escaped Artaignan.

"Strolling players, by heaven! Like that fellow what's-his-name—Molière! He was one of your fine gang too, was he?"

"No, no." Sarasin's voice weakened. "He knew nothing—no one else knew. . . . Ah!"

He whimpered, and the life escaped him, and he lay limp.

ARTAGNAN stood up. He saw everything; it was damnably clear. That kerchief, with information of vast import to the enemy in Arras—clever, this Henriette! Devilish clever! He went to her, stared down at her unconscious white lovely features; and the anger died from his eyes. An actress, a strolling vagabond—and a spy!

His face softened. Last night was last night; today was today. He pulled the silk kerchief from under his jacket, stooped, and tied it about her dark hair. She still wore the gypsy costume. How well she had played, both gypsy and great lady!

He came to one knee, touched his lips to her forehead, and rose. How the devil had she known the truth about him, about Charles de Batz? And the truth about that swaggering Gascon, really bred in a Paris fish-market? Spies, and the knowledge of spies, no doubt.

"Adieu," he said softly. "Adieu! And henceforth, for Charles d'Artaignan, may the foul fiend fly away with all actors and actresses alike!"

He turned to his horse, swung up into the saddle, and rode away to learn whether Bergerac lived or died. He need not have worried. After all, it is only because of the gashed throat which turned Cyrano de Bergerac from soldiering to literature, that the siege of Arras is remembered by posterity.

Another story of "The World Was Their Stage" will appear in our next issue.



*A Dakota farm may have its exciting moments of drama too—as witness this fine story.*



# *A Giant In the Cañon*

**By BIGELOW NEAL**

**J**OHN McCABE filed on his claim in the fall. He and Ruth were married in the spring. They spent a week camping and wandering through the Dakota Badlands. One day McCabe pulled his team to a halt before the claim shack, and they were at home.

For the moment, McCabe did not lead his bride into the boxlike affair of tarpaper and rough boards. Instead he slipped his hand under the girl's arm and led her down a gentle slope to the west, to a point where the bench-land fell away to green acres of bottom-land.

McCabe had little eye for the scenery. He saw only the wavy black hair, the slender form, and the white fingers resting on his arm. But to the girl it was all wonderful—and terrible too.

Back of them the land sloped to the foot of a towering pile of clay. A butte, naked, scored by wind and water and frost, horizontally striped by the many colors of clay, coal and scoria, at its summit a ledge of sandstone stretching like a battlement against the sky. Beyond, she could imagine the endless sweep of the prairie.

A glance at the frowning mass of clay behind, and the girl shuddered, shifting her gaze to the big man at her side, then down the slope to the level grass-covered floor of the valley, to Clear Creek winding through a fringe of timber, beyond to another area of green and then to the

chaotic jumble of the Badlands—peaks, buttes and cañons filling the foreground from the valley to the sky.

"It's a terrible place to bring a girl like you," he said.

She laughed. "I'm not afraid. It's—" She had glanced again at the forbidding butte frowning above them, and an involuntary shiver broke the sentence. But she finished bravely: "It's home."

He gathered her in his arms. "Brave girl." He held her closer and looked down into her face, but he saw nothing of fear, only a smile that broke again into a ripple of laughter.

That night, as the sun dipped below the Badlands, they sat on the door-sill, her head against his shoulder. "Really," he said, "it isn't half bad when you come to think. I've heard the cattle-men say these hills are the friendliest, safest place in the world. They hide no dangerous animals. They furnish wood and coal and shelter from storms. Even at night when they are silent and awesome, they are in reality a source of protection."

"Yes, I know," she agreed. "This feeling is all foolishness. I know the hills are harmless, and I know we have neighbors even if we can't see them. But John, what would happen if—" She pointed silently to the mouth of a timber-choked cañon emptying into the valley just across the border of their land.

"You mean Big Olaf?"



"Yes. In his own wild way, he loved me, John. When I taught the Johnson school, he used to come and sit for hours and watch me. It's a shame to say it, but I dream of that awful man with his misshapen face. I know he was an engineer, and I know he was battered in a wreck. I was terribly sorry for him, but that didn't make up for the glare in his eyes. And then he threatened to kill you, John. And what would happen if he came back to his claim?"

John McCabe was a stronger man than most. He was over six feet tall, and his frame was in proportion. As a youth in the timber country of Maine he had seen much of the outdoors, and of hard work. His muscles were second to none but those of Olaf, in the whole Clear Creek country. And yet he knew he would stand little chance in the grip of that half-crazed giant. Olaf was a superman in all but mentality. Just how far crazed the giant was, McCabe did not know. And so, while the girl paled at the thought of what might happen to her husband, McCabe grew sober, thinking of something worse. He could not be with her always. There would be times when she must be alone.

He broke off his reverie, getting to his feet. "In the first place, he's gone and isn't likely to come back. In the second, I'm not afraid of him if he does." And so he led her out through the twilight, showing her the progress he had made on the new log barn, and the site he had chosen for the chicken-house.

**T**HAT spring John McCabe worked harder than he'd ever worked in his life. There were so many things to do at once. For more than a month he tramped back and forth across the bottomland behind four horses and a breaking-plow. His labor netted him a thirty-acre field of flax. Then came the garden, although Ruth had done much of it alone. Afterward he turned his attention to small improvements on the shack. He could not do much, of course, for their money had gone for the horses and harness, the necessary machinery and seed.

Haying came next. A part of Ruth's last year's salary as a teacher had been invested in half a dozen cows. If all else failed, they must be the mainstay. Another month of this, and John turned his attention to ash poles and cottonwood trees for the barn. Work as he might, it seemed that he was always behind; and soon winter would be upon them.

When fall came, they had a fair garden, enough corn to fatten their winter's supply of pork, and plenty of milk. Their cash crop was a failure, for dry weather and hot suns burned the flax. Like many of their neighbors, they came through the winter with few resources other than courage and hope.

The second year promised better and proved worse. It began with rain in abundance, and ended with grasshoppers on the same scale. By midsummer the crackling pests had cleaned the slate. By dint of chasing grasshoppers every thirty minutes throughout the day, Ruth saved a portion of her garden, but that and the wild hay was all they had.

**M**CCABE was discouraged. One noon he came in from the hay-field and sat on the door-sill while Ruth pulled grasshoppers from the neck of his shirt.

"Darn it, girl," he exclaimed, wiping the streams of chaff-clogged perspiration from his eyes, "let's sell out and quit."

Instead of answering, the girl brought him a basin of cool water, and when he seemed not to notice it, she took the washcloth herself and bathed his face. Then she tried to instill a courage she did not feel.

"Listen, John: I know it's bad, but all we have in the world is invested here. If we give up, we'll be homeless, and we'll have nothing to start again with."

"We'll starve here."

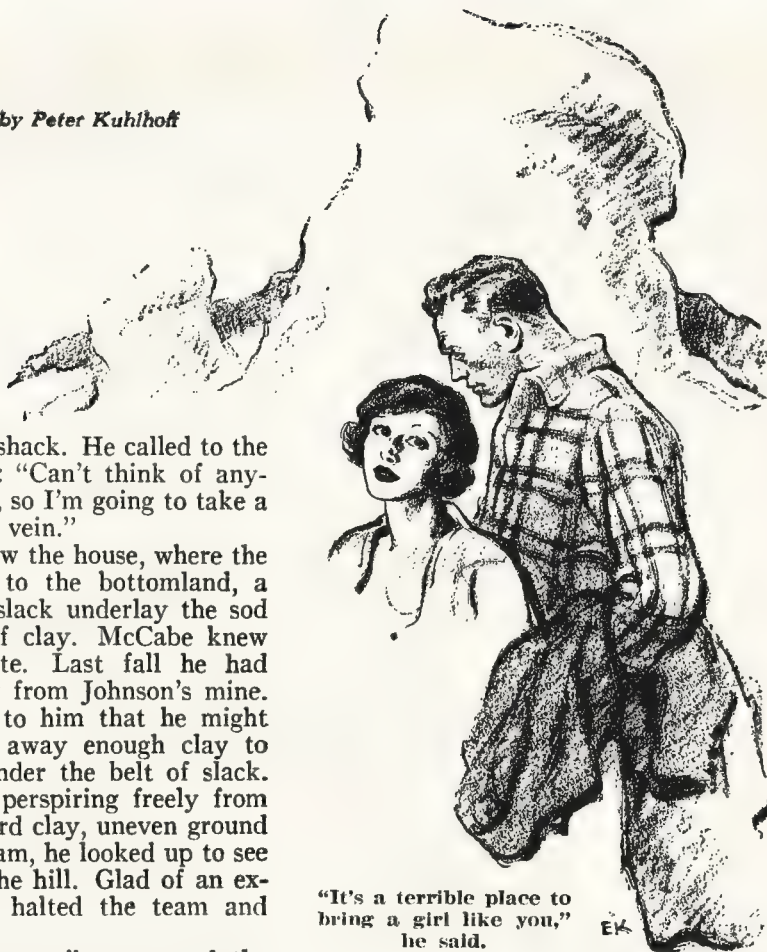
"I don't think so, John; we have a few vegetables—not many, but they'll last if we are careful. We have milk, and I've canned a lot of wild fruit. Trading the calves for the extra team left us without any meat, but the hills are full of jack-rabbits."

"They taste like horse meat."

"Well, why not cottontails, then?"

"They make me think of cats; but if you are game to go hungry and half-dressed, we'll try one more year."

Yet he knew it was hopeless. After lunch he put on his hat and was halfway to the barn before he realized he had no definite objective. He stopped in thought. There was no use putting up more hay. There was no market for the surplus, and he had enough for two years already stacked. There was no corn to cultivate, and there seemed little use in cutting fence-posts, because the ground was too dry to set them if they were cut. Thinking of the ground gave him an idea. He hitched four horses to his breaking-plow, tied his scraper to the plow-beam



and drove by the shack. He called to the girl as he passed: "Can't think of anything better to do, so I'm going to take a crack at this coal vein."

A few rods below the house, where the bench fell away to the bottomland, a streak of lignite slack underlay the sod and a few feet of clay. McCabe knew little about lignite. Last fall he had hauled his supply from Johnson's mine. Now it occurred to him that he might plow and scrape away enough clay to learn what lay under the belt of slack.

An hour later, perspiring freely from his battle with hard clay, uneven ground and a plunging team, he looked up to see a man climbing the hill. Glad of an excuse for rest, he halted the team and mopped his brow.

"Benton's my name," announced the stranger, puffing visibly from his climb. "What's the chances of building a railroad through your front yard?"

He was a big man with graying hair and he wore laced boots, khaki trousers and a broad-brimmed hat. He radiated friendliness, and his smile brought a prompt response from McCabe.

"Fine!" exclaimed the settler. "I can't raise a thing to ship out, and I can't buy anything to ship in, but I'll enjoy the whistle."

Now that he had wiped the stinging perspiration from his eyes, he could see two more men down on the flat, one carrying a transit, and farther on, other men and a line of stakes, white in the sunlight.

"Gosh," he exclaimed, sobering suddenly, "you don't mean it, do you?"

"Sure, I mean it; and what's more, it seems to me you have more to ship out than most anybody else."

McCabe was puzzled. "You mean—"

The engineer pointed at a dark streak showing through the clay at his feet.

"Lignite, that's what we're after; and you've got more than your great-grand-

"It's a terrible place to bring a girl like you," he said.

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children can dig, if they live as long as Methuselah."

McCabe stared at the man in silence. The engineer smiled again as he saw the mental dilemma of the settler. "Think I'm joking? What do you suppose we're building this road for? Merely for fun? Not on your tintype, young man. We're after coal; you have as much as anybody, and yours is easier to uncover than most. All you've got to do is to take the top off from this hill, and build a chute down to the flat right there." He was standing now, pointing with the stem of a pipe. "We'll put in a siding for your cars. Isn't that simple enough?"

"But who's going to buy the coal? What can I get for it?"

"Well, in the end you fellows along Clear Creek will have to build some sort of a selling organization, but to start things off, the road can use a few hundred cars, and we'll find a market for a lot more. For example, I'll give you an order for two thousand tons at a dollar and a half a ton loaded on our cars this fall and winter. How's that?"



The light of a new hope glowed in the face of John McCabe. It would be a triumph, too, for God knew how many men had laughed at him for filing on the most worthless claim in the country. Now he could show them. Now Ruth and he could have the home of which they had dreamed.

The light in his face died out. Even if he worked alone, all this would require oats for his horses, and he had neither money nor credit. And to go ahead on a scale large enough to justify the side track and to make real money would require an investment far beyond his reach.

"What's the matter?" It was the voice of the engineer.

"I'm broke."

Benton laughed outright. "Why not borrow a little on a sure thing?"

"I haven't any credit, and the banks won't lend, anyway."

"Now listen," said the engineer, tapping his finger with the stem of his pipe. "I took the trouble to ask a few questions before I came to see you. I hear you're both industrious and trustworthy. Also I know that up on the prairie you'll find any number of farmers anxious to work for any reasonable pay. The company will be glad to advance the money to move the top of this hill, and take for security only the coal under it. Now all you've got to do is to get busy, and you'll be on Easy Street in time to buy somebody a Christmas present."

**R**UTH was picking chokecherries, and when she saw him coming, she said: "I know, John, we've no sugar to spare now, but these can be canned with nothing more expensive than heat; and then, when we can afford the sugar, they will be ready."

He laughed like an exultant boy. "What's a little thing like sugar? Don't you know we've got the world by the tail? Sit down here on the grass and I'll tell you all about it."

He told her of Benton and the engineers, of the unsuspected depth of the coal vein, and of the certain profits to be harvested from their land. The longer he talked, the more excited he became. "Dog-gone," he cried, "it's straight goods. It's a sure thing."

He sprang to his feet, lifted the girl and deposited her like a sack of flour, across his shoulder. His attempt to execute a war-dance was cut short when she pulled his hair, but she couldn't dampen his enthusiasm.

That night, when the chores were done and the fiery rim of the sun hung just above the Badlands they sat by the door, cooled by the evening breeze, and thrilled by drafts of new-born hope. But abruptly McCabe felt Ruth's hand clutch his with a convulsive grip.

**H**E glanced down at her face. The strain had returned and she was staring into the night. Shifting his gaze to follow hers, he saw the mouth of the opposite coulee, and there climbing silently into the moonlight, a thin column of smoke. "So our friend Mr. Flatface has returned," he exclaimed. "I hoped that old moose had gone for good and all."

"He must have heard"—she spoke almost in a whisper as if her voice might carry across the valley—"of the railroad. John, isn't it a shame, just when we might have been so happy!"

John McCabe was guilty of a sigh. "It is, for a fact. And this means no more walks or berry-picking for you, no staying at home when I am away, and no stepping beyond the door after dark. Tomorrow when I go to town you will have to bump out the trip in the wagon, or else drop off and spend the day at the Johnsons'. I sha'n't be gone very—"

"John—that awful noise!"

A wail came from the cottonwoods across the valley. It was an eerie thing halfway between the cry of a coyote and the howl of a wolf.

McCabe gritted his teeth. "That's that infernal hound of his!"

McCabe slept little that night. It was not the baying of the hound, however, nor the ceaseless answering yelps of the coyotes which kept him staring at the naked rafters; it was the antics of his own imagination. What if the giant were as crazy as most people thought? What if he should catch Ruth alone?

And as he pictured her fate in the hands of Big Olaf, she lay beside him equally sleepless. What if the giant were to catch John in some narrow path as he returned with the cows at night? A club—and a blow from behind; or perhaps a rifle-shot from high on the bluff.

But in spite of the threat which took the keen edge from their new-found cheer, life moved swiftly. McCabe made his trip to town and found that Benton's influence, plus his own reputation had made things ridiculously easy. With the coming of the railroad, the little inland town was experiencing a boom. Any one who could sign a note could borrow



"What's the chances of building a railroad through your front yard?"

money. And as the town sprang into new life, so did the valley of Clear Creek.

One morning Ruth McCabe walked down to the mine and stood on the edge of the new cut. Below her men and teams moved back and forth, plowing and scraping the heavy clay. Looking beyond, she saw a cluster of tents and a long ridge of black earth rising from the floor of the valley. Over it swarmed more men and more teams, heavy tractors pulling grading and elevating machines, and endless lines of dump-wagons driving the flat-topped ridge on and on. As she watched, a man climbed the bank and stood beside her. It was her old friend Buttonhook Johnson, tall, skinny, drooping at the top like an overripe sunflower, dripping tobacco-juice at every joint, and speaking the queerest English ever heard in the valley. His most distinguishing linguistic achievement was the constant use and misuse of the word "*else*," coupled with the ability to talk one way clearly, and wheeze his words even as his breath came in.

"Else good morning, Ruth McCabe."

"Good morning, Mr. Johnson. John tells me you have five teams here in the mine."

"Else sevum should be more correcter, because I shall have put two more on the job this morning. And what's more, shall I find me one horse and another man, I

should have eight teams tomorrow. Else I shall be a capitalistic right, not?"

Ruth laughed. With all his oddities, there was no finer nor kinder man in the community than Buttonhook. Just now he appeared troubled. He was gazing toward the valley where the usual column of smoke hung above the cottonwoods.

"Else I should want to talk to you about something?"

"What can I do for you, Mr. Johnson?"

"Just now you can't do me anything. It's the crazy man I should want to speak about. You're apt to get hurted, not? And maybe your old man killed deader'n hay, or all both of you?"

SOBERED instantly, Ruth replied: "I know, and I'm worried to death. He thinks he has reason to hate John; he—"

"Aint he right, not?"

"No, he isn't. It wouldn't have made any difference if I never had met John."

"Else that aint the way young squirts look at things. Whoever shall get her is all to blame for everything, even when it won't rain. If he thinks John took you away from him, then it shall be that John did took you away from him. That's the way he looks at it, and he's crazier'n sevum bedbugs fumigatin'. Else he shall have said he would kill your husband, and I seen him when he said it."



"But isn't there a chance, Mr. Johnson, it was merely in anger and through lack of self-control? Isn't it possible that he might have got over it?"

"Else not! What you don't know about him is a lot, and what I know is more. Should you happen to know that nobody aint never allowed in that coulee?" Buttonhook raised a bony finger and pointed at the home of the giant. "Should you know what happened to Irish Olson when he went pokin' his nose in there?"

"No," said the girl, "I hadn't heard."

"Else he got his nose in and got it bloody, and he shall have no dust in the seat of his pants since, not at all. And Tom Bingheimer? Else Tom got hit so hard that it busted his arm, and nobody aint seen the inside of that place since."

Here Buttonhook changed his tune to an awed whisper. "Listen! An' what's morer, he's got a still in there with a boiler as big as a lokomotor on the railroad, and from down by my place you can see red lights in the trees all night long. God knows what devilishment he's up to, but the thing for you to do is to hire somebody to run this place while you and your ol' man hits the trail out of here before you aint alive to hit nuttin'."

SOME days later when the engineer Benton walked into McCabe's house, announced he was sick of camp fare and wanted a piece of honest pie, Ruth asked his opinion.

"Couldn't say," he answered. "Undoubtedly the fellow is a bit off, and possibly dangerous if he thinks someone has misused him. I tried to get into his place the other day, but the hound met me more than halfway. His master was right behind. If it hadn't been for the fact that I talked coal mighty fast, I believe he would have kicked me clear out to the road. But I've known a case or two like it before. I imagine somebody, maybe a bunch of thoughtless youngsters, laughed at him after he got his face patched up. Out of that grew his dislike of appearing in public or of having folks see him. Likely it's grown to an actual hatred of all people more fortunate than he. But of course I'm guessing."

And in reply to her inquiry about the giant boiler and the still:

"Queer how stories like that start. Yes, he has a boiler, and a big one. And a lot of machinery too, but I imagine it has more to do with stripping coal than with making hootch. Cracked or not cracked, he's an engineer, you know, and he used

to be a good one. Lastly this consciousness of his hideous face has affected him queerly. For instance, he hired some men to help him haul in the heaviest part of his machinery at night. Then somehow he got the men clear out of the country. There is no sense in it, except that he doesn't want to see people or have them see him, nor know a thing about his business. In other words, there really is no mystery about him except the actual state of his mind."

Whatever his intentions, the giant did not appear, and McCabe forgot a portion of his worries as his mind was submerged in his work. He even omitted loading his shotgun at night and standing it near his bed.

One night early in the fall when the dust of his last explosion had drifted away in the dusk, McCabe picked up the box of unused dynamite and carried it into the short tunnel which served him as a powder-magazine and a general storehouse. Then with a glance in the direction of the cook-car and tents where his men were fed and housed, he stumbled across ground littered with eveners, chains, plows and scrapers and so up the path which led to his home.

As he breasted the summit, a yellow light glowed dimly ahead. Even on the coldest nights that light gave him a feeling of coziness. There Ruth was waiting. While he knew it was no more than a prairie shack glorified by a woman's touch, he could imagine the soft glow of the lamp, the sides of the heater ruddy from burning lignite, and the table with its burden of piping hot supper, designed for a man who had spent the day at the muscle-racking task of stripping coal. As the ground leveled off, he quickened his pace. Then suddenly he halted.

THE picture of warmth and comfort was gone. In its place, there before the door of his home, he saw a shadow, a vague threatening thing which faded slowly into the night as he stared. Instantly with a cry, half horror and half rage, he was in pursuit. But when he reached the shack, there was nothing to see. The thing had vanished.

Several times he circled the house with no result. He saw nothing and heard nothing but the monotonous clang as the breeze passed through the tower of the windmill. Finally, gritting his teeth in exasperation, he turned toward the house.

Ruth McCabe heard her husband's hurried footsteps on the path. As she opened





**"John has a chance, now. If anything can save him, this will."**

the door and he took her in his arms, she noticed his labored breathing.

"John," she exclaimed, "what is wrong—why have you been running?"

He drew a deep breath. "Hungry," he panted, "ran myself out of wind for something to eat."

The explanation was sufficient for the moment, and she relaxed against him. Then feeling the violent action of his heart, "John, you're not telling me the truth." Her eyes and lips framed a question which would not be denied. "Tell me, have you seen Big Olaf?"

He gave up. "Yes, I have. He was standing right by the front window. I made a run for him, but he was too quick for me."

"Thank heaven, you didn't catch him."

"Why? I'm not afraid of the big devil."

"I know you're not, John; but just the same, no man half so strong ever has been

in the country. With a weapon of some kind you might be safe, but those awful arms would crush you if you got within their reach."

"Don't worry, give me one good single-tree or a fence-post, and I'll flatten him in no time. But just the same, this means the breaking up of our happy home. Buttonhook was right. The place for you is in town until I catch that fellow and trim him down a bit."

She protested that she was not afraid for herself. "I don't believe he would harm me if he had a chance. It's of you I'm thinking—"

But he cut her short, and she knew from the set of his jaw that argument would be useless. Silently she put his supper on the table. As she poured his coffee, her hand shook, spilling it. She saw his determination crystallize at her sign of fear.



"Tomorrow night, I'll get Buttonhook to come up while I do the shooting. From now on, you mustn't be alone a moment after dark."

THE following evening as the sun had dropped behind the Badlands, Ruth McCabe stood in the door looking out over the valley and thinking of the changes made in so short a time. The tents in the valley were gone, but the new grade lay square-shouldered and black along the foot of the ridge. A line of new telegraph-poles paralleled the grade—another thing for which to be thankful, for the Company had offered the use of its poles for the single strand of wire which now bound the community together. Behind her, on the kitchen wall, her own phone rang sharply for the central office. In a few days the rails would be laid. Even now far down the valley she saw the smoke of an engine.

From the opposite valley another column of smoke climbed above the trees, and the girl could not repress a shiver of dread. It passed in a moment, though, for Buttonhook Johnson came up the hill and across the yard.

"Else John shall say for me to come up and ride herd on you until he gets here. He shall have three shots to put in before supper, not?"

"It's kind of you, Mr. Johnson. Really I'm not afraid. That is, I—"

Buttonhook shook his head gloomily. "I shall have just told John better he sell out and quit the country, else anyway to rent the place until that crazy gink shall move on."

In the silence which followed, a dull roar came from the mine, and a cloud of dust climbed into the air. Buttonhook looked up at the sky.

"Else doggone it looks like wind anyway, if not rain. Maybe I shall phone Mamma to look for me when she sees me, and meanwhile bed down right here."

When supper was ready and the table set, McCabe had not come. Knowing that he often remained to pick up tools scattered by the men, Ruth waited patiently. But when fifteen minutes had passed, she went to the door and called. There was no answer. She tried again. No sound came back but the hollow moan of the wind on the bluffs above.

"Else I shall go down and call him," announced Buttonhook; "the wind takes your voice plumb out of the country."

Ruth began to serve the supper. John would be all the hungrier for the delay.

Carrying the lamp to the table, she stopped and listened. Then she set the lamp down and darted to the door, only to collide violently with the panting figure of Buttonhook. The farmer's voice was trembling with excitement.

"My God, the hill came down, and the tunnel is under it! Quick, the telephone for help!"

Dazed, faint, holding to the table for support as the news struck home, the girl fought for control. Buttonhook reached the phone ahead of her, and she heard him calling the Clear Creek operator. Then they were out in the night, running toward the mine. One single agonized look confirmed Buttonhook's words: The weight of the hill above the newly formed cut had proved too much for the band of wet clay just above the coal. Under the terrific pressure, it had squeezed out on to the vein, and the face of the cut tipped forward, burying the mouth of the tunnel. Frantically Ruth called again and again, for there was a possibility John had left the mine: but no answer came. Starting toward the camp of the crew, she saw that Buttonhook already had called them. They came streaming down the bank, to gather in an excited group before the slide. Desperately the girl began to tear at the great pile of sand and rock. But she did not cry out, nor weep; her eyes were dry with fear.

ONE glance at the slide, and the men shook their heads. The tunnel ran no more than eight feet into the hill. Even if all of it remained intact, there would not be air enough to support life more than a very few hours. To remove that pile of clay before daylight was an impossibility; and McCabe, even if he were unhurt by the slide, could not live that long. Confused by the impossible task, shivering in a rapidly rising wind, the crew worked spasmodically merely because a frail girl tore with bare hands at the slide. It was Buttonhook Johnson who broke the spell.

"Else what shall the matter be! We got help coming, and lots of it." He pointed down the Clear Creek road, where the headlights of cars turned the trail to a stream of fire. The sight brought courage to the crew. With a yell, the men tore into the pile of clay.

It was Benton the engineer who headed a stream of rescuers into the mine. At a glance he understood the situation. He grabbed Buttonhook by the arm. "Split them into two crews, Johnson; they're in

each other's way as it is, and we'll have a hundred and fifty men in half an hour." Pulling off his coat, the engineer threw it over Ruth McCabe's shoulders. "Mrs. McCabe, it's a long chance, but we'll do the best we can. Meanwhile wrap this around you, and keep back far enough to avoid the flying dirt. These men have no time to be careful."

SO began the fight for the life of John McCabe. An hour passed as the crews alternated in toiling like demons. Another, while the voices of Benton and Buttonhook drove them to even greater exertions. Yet another when the strain began to tell. "We never can make it, Johnson," gasped the engineer, his voice husky. "If we were able to hold the pace, it would take all night and then some, and they're tiring now."

Buttonhook glanced at the slowly yielding pile, and then at Ruth McCabe. "Doggone," he said; "the poor little kid's a widdler!" He brushed his sleeve across his eyes. "She aint never— *What's that?*" At his cry, the laboring men stopped work and gazed in the direction of his extended arm. A chorus of cries arose, and the crowd split to scamper for safety. "*Himmel!*" cried Buttonhook again. "It's the devil on a string."

Whatever it was, nothing of its kind had ever been seen in the Clear Creek valley. To all appearances it was a monster from another world, or else from the dim ages of giants and dragons. It came up the slope and on to the level of the coal with wide-open mouth and two rows of terrible teeth, one raking at the coal and the other upraised as if to crush the life from any living thing in its path. That it was a thing of steel driven by the intelligence of a man, few seemed to realize. But Benton said: "John has a chance, now. If anything can save him, this will."

"What is it?" gasped the girl.

"Well, it's what you might call the granddaddy of all the steam-shovels. It's what engineers call a drag-line. See the cables pulling it?"

Ruth saw the slender threads of steel vibrating in the night. Her eyes followed them up high above her head, and there she saw the end of a great boom and pulleys carrying the slender cables. Turning, she looked along the boom to where, far back of them, a greater monster had approached, unheard in the wind and unseen in the darkness. It was the housing and mechanism of the drag-line looming up against the sky. From it plumes of

white vapor rushed upward and a sullen column of smoke swept away on the wind. Again the engineer was speaking. "By gosh, men, now we've a chance!"

Where the thing came from, the girl did not ask. Its miraculous appearance she accepted without question. Fascinated, she watched. The monster bucket moved to the foot of the slide, and slowly but inexorably it drove, grumbling and crunching, into the mixture of clay and rocks. The cables were running low now. Ruth glanced up, saw the boom lower over the top of the slide. The bucket hesitated, shivered and came on until its wide-open jaws boiled over with clay. Then came a sigh from the engine behind them, followed by a new whirr of machinery. The boom rose and swung over their heads. Again the bucket shivered and began to rise. Under the mighty power behind those slender threads of steel, nearly four tons of clay climbed into the air and swung away to the outer edge of the mine. Out there as the bucket reached the end of its swing, a loud clang sounded. The bottom of the bucket opened, and its load went hurtling earthward. Without a pause the bucket came swinging back, to settle gently to the vein and tear again into the vitals of the slide.

As a realization of the meaning of this new and powerful aid came to them, a wild cheer burst from the crowd. Now they were working like mad.

Ruth stood by Benton and Buttonhook Johnson, staring wide-eyed as the hungry shovel gnawed at the hellish pile which was claiming the life of the man she loved.

Under Benton's direction, the men shifted their assault from the bottom and face to the top of the slide. There they raked and tore at the débris—kicking, sliding and shoveling it down to the iron jaws of the bucket.

HOURS grew to ages, for Ruth. Again and again she looked for the dawn in the eastern sky. But the night still held and the moan of the wind mingled with the metallic ring of picks and shovels, the shrill hissing of steam, the clang of the ponderous bucket and the whirr of those slender cables vibrating against the clouds. Overhead the long arm of the boom swung back and forth, its iron braces wringing high-pitched shrieks from the wind.

Once she heard Buttonhook speaking to Benton. "Doggone, else now I should know all the secret in the coulee. Crazy Swede aint so crazy like we—"



A cry from the top of the slide! Ruth swayed against Buttonhook's sheepskin coat. Benton scrambled up the slide. At the top he tore off his cap and waved it frantically. "There's a hole open into the tunnel!" Then a pause as the engineer dropped to his knees with his head to the ground. Another cry: "He's alive!"

She saw them coming down the slide. John McCabe walking a bit unsteadily between Benton and the Clear Creek doctor. Then she was in her husband's arms.

Benton recalled them to their senses. "Maybe we had better say a word to the man who turned the trick." He touched McCabe on the shoulder and pointed to the great dragline turning slowly on its endless beltlike feet of steel.

"What's that?" exclaimed McCabe.

"That," said Benton, "is the thing that made a seeming lunatic out of a merely eccentric man. In other words, it's your friend the enemy, otherwise known as Big Olaf, and the drag-line he didn't want anyone else to see because he feared they would laugh at him and it."

They walked to the side of the machine and Benton yelled to the man in the cab. The door opened and the distorted face of Big Olaf peered down through the drifting steam. "Olaf," said John McCabe, speaking with an obvious catch in his voice, "it's too late and too cold to talk much and the doctor says I'll have to go to bed for a day or two. Can't you come over tomorrow and let us tell you how—"

"Dat's all right. I'm glad you're safe again. And about tomorrow, well—maybe. I come to see you one night"—he passed his hand vaguely across his chest—"but something hurted me in the middle and I—didn't come in."

"But Olaf," exclaimed the girl, "John wants you to come and I want you to come. We never can tell you how much you have done for us and we want to be your friends."

"Dat's fine," replied the giant simply. "Most people don't like me and I need friends just like anybody else. I'll be over tomorrow."

Big Olaf waved his arm and they stepped back. Slowly, as his hands moved among the levers, the ponderous machine began to move. The boom, with its swinging bucket, swung high against the clouds. They caught a last glimpse of the giant as a glow of light from the fire-door filled the cab. Again he waved his arm. Then the door clanged shut and he was gone in the night.



## RED FOG

**T**HERE had been a black man and a white man; but now there was only a black man. He was not old, not beyond his early twenties. He stood straight and tall, as a desert man does; but he wore some clothes, a shirt and dungarees. He took the clothes off before he left the camp, for he was going back to his tribe. He wasn't a thief, and the white man's gold was not much use. The metal in the camel pack-saddles and the picks and shovels was good for spear-points; but the black man took nothing.

He buried the gold in the sand, because it brought whites around the way honey brings flies, and there were too many whites. He'd been farther than any of his tribe—as far even as Kalgoorlie; and he knew there were too many whites. It was better not to have any more out here in the desert. The witch-doctors said it was, and they should know.

The gold in the sand would hurt no one, because no one would ever know it



*A New Zealand writer contributes this colorful story of treasure in the desert "down under."*

## By LOUIS KAYE

*was there, and it was back where it belonged: in the ground. The white man had lost his life over it, but whites often did that out here, and it was incomprehensible but true. A black should not think too much about it. There was nothing left to do now but drive the camels away, and then he could go back to his tribe. He had shed his servitude with the clothes that lay in the dust. He'd rub his body with goanna fat, daub it with white ochre when the moon was full, and stamp his feet in the corroboree with the other warriors of the tribe.*

*He would forget that he had seen the great white man's camp Kalgoorlie, and that he had been as faithful as a dog to a white man, and that he had buried the shining gold. Let it all go behind him and away from him, because it was no lasting part of his life. He was a Nokaru warrior. His spirit would go to the places of the gods, and his body would become the red dust of the desert when all was done. No white man could change that.*

DUST had been in the air all day, and the wind was stronger now, so Morgan and Emmet were looking for a place to camp. The camels had started the search first, trying to turn off the trail, or where one might assume the trail was. It had never been more than a narrow line of camel-tracks where some prospector had passed, heading for water; but what it was now you couldn't see. You could see the head of your camel and the head of the one behind you; there was nothing anywhere else except red fog. When Morgan, up at the head of the seven-string, spoke a word now and then, Emmet could just about hear him, and occasionally he could just about see him, but that was all. It was a hell of a day, even for an Australian desert day.

Emmet was as ready to camp as the camels were, but Morgan wanted to go on to water.

"We're close up," he said. "Keep the string moving. Where there's water, ten to one there's shelter."



There was none here—not a tree, not a ridge across the driving wind. But you could unload and unsaddle camels, and shelter in the lee of a pack-dump. Emmet had done it time and time again, and he wanted to do it now. But Morgan kept on till a tree was heard thrashing in the wind.

When you got closer, you could see there were more trees, about a dozen of them, and it was a place to camp, all right, because one of the trees had the white trunk of a paperbark.

"Water around," said Morgan. "Use this as a base when the weather clears."

Emmet helped unload and unsaddle the camels, and held nose-lines while Morgan put the hobbles on the roaring ill-tempered animals. Then he discovered he was hungry, but couldn't do much about it. The grub-bags were coated with dust, and you breathed dust and wept it out of your eyes, so there was no sense in eating it too. Emmet huddled in the shelter of the pack-dump and smoked. A cigarette still tasted about the same.

Morgan wouldn't stay down, but was on his feet, looking around for the water. This was no immediate requirement, because there was plenty in the pack canteens and barrels. But Morgan was like that. He always wanted to make sure of things. "You can lick the desert," he would say, "if you make sure of things. Half the trouble with most fellers is they just trust to luck, and that's no good in this country. Every step you take, you got to plan out first."

**T**HEN Morgan, wandering there in the dust-storm, found a man who hadn't planned everything, apparently. Morgan was calling it out to Emmet, before Emmet could see him coming back. He finished telling about it as he stood leaning against the wind.

"Right there near his pack-dump. No sign of camels, but the dump aint touched. Couldn't have been blacks."

Emmet went back with him. There was no spear-wound. There was no sign of a fight at all. And thirst couldn't have troubled the man, because there was water at his pack-dump. "And in that hole," said Emmet. "You were right; the water was close up."

Morgan said: "Well, what happened? Sickness is the only thing. He died that way, right here after he got to water. Don't suppose he had any drugs in his packs. Wouldn't have thought of them. Most of these fellers, they never do."

"Well, the desert's got him," Emmet said.

"Not the desert," Morgan contradicted. "Sick, and he never looked after himself properly. Might have happened anywhere. . . . You know who he is?"

Emmet said: "Maybe there's something in his packs. Better look through."

There was a letter. It was in a sealed envelope, with no stamp on it, but obviously was to be posted at the first settlement. Emmet didn't want to open it.

"You can see it's addressed to a woman. His wife, I guess. Name's Raynor. That's enough."

"It isn't proving that's his name," Morgan said. "Better read the letter."

Emmet still objected. "We hand the letter to a trooper, and it's his job then."

"When do we see a trooper? Maybe not for a long time—even if we headed straight in. Look, give me that letter, and I'll open it." He tore it open.

**E**MMET waited for it to be handed back to him. Morgan didn't hand it back. He stood with his back to the wind, the letter held close to his dust-stung eyes. Then the wind whipped it out of his hand. Emmet tried to catch it, and followed it down-wind, till the dust-haze was all around like a fog. He could hear Morgan calling:

"Let it go. I know what was in it, and it aint that important."

Emmet came back. "What was in it? Was his name Raynor?"

"Yes. Letter was to his sister."

"But the address was *Mrs.*," Emmet said. "Mrs. Eric Raynor. It was a Kalgoorlie address."

Morgan said: "Well, he signed himself Jim, that was all. His married sister's name wouldn't be the same as his, now I come to think of it."

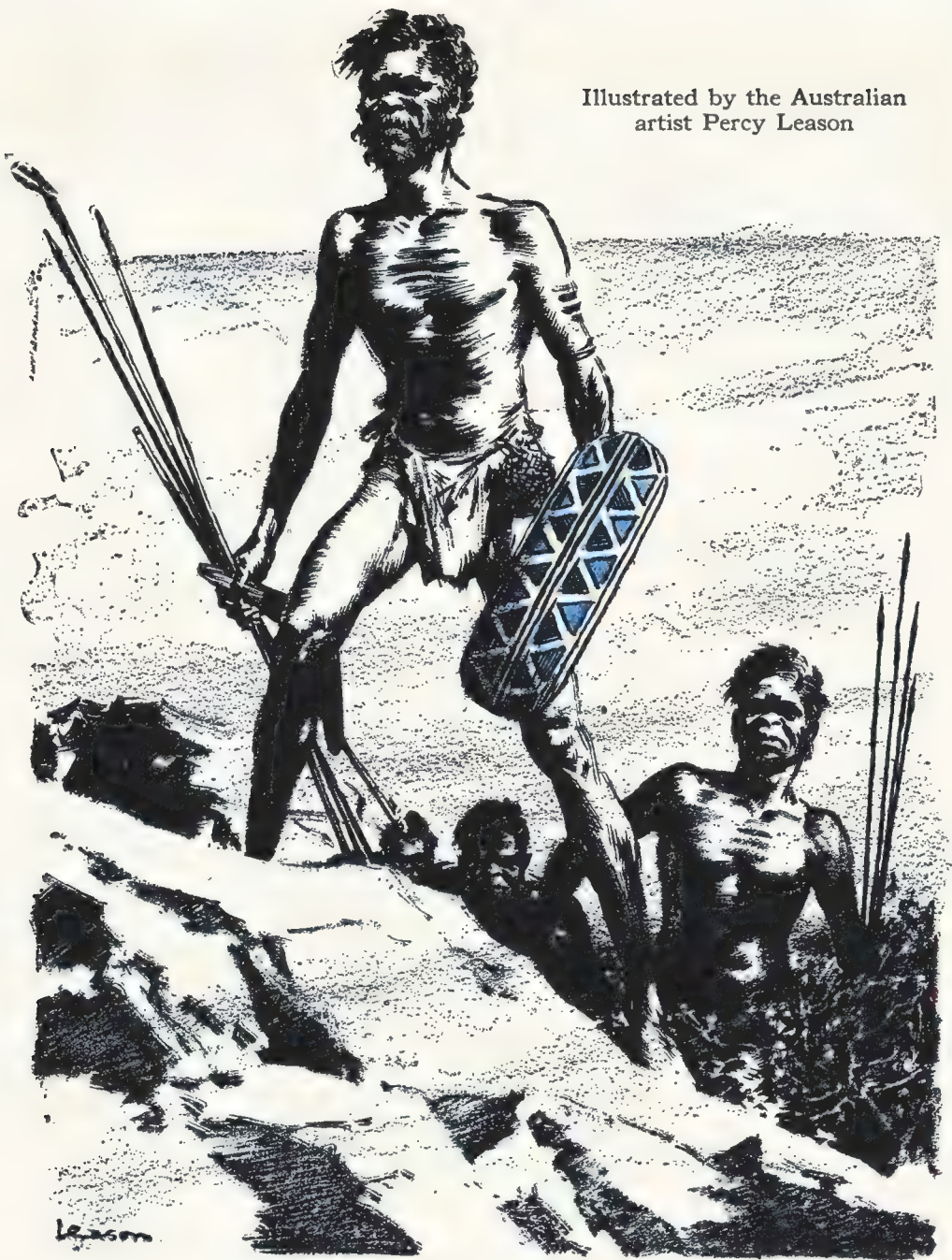
"What else was in the letter? Anything about his illness?"

"He said he wasn't well, but he didn't say what was wrong. Never thought it was serious, I suppose. You can see he expected to post that letter. If we could find his boy, we'd know something more; but I'll bet that black-fellow's gone with the camels."

"He never touched the packs. Maybe when the dust's cleared up, there'll be natives around the water here. We'll find out something. Anyway, we better go to a police post, or send word."

"When the dust clears," Morgan said. "Can't trek anywhere till then. Better go back to our own camp."

Illustrated by the Australian  
artist Percy Leason



It seemed some distance in the dust and wind, though it was only a hundred yards. The dust walled off everything. The sun was blotted out, and Emmet looked for it several times before the day finally ended, but he never saw it, not even as a pale disk, before it went over the skyline. He knew when it was night because the red dust turned black.

The night was cold, which was not unexpected, since the sun hadn't shone all day. Emmet, supperless, rolled in blankets and slept after a final cigarette. He

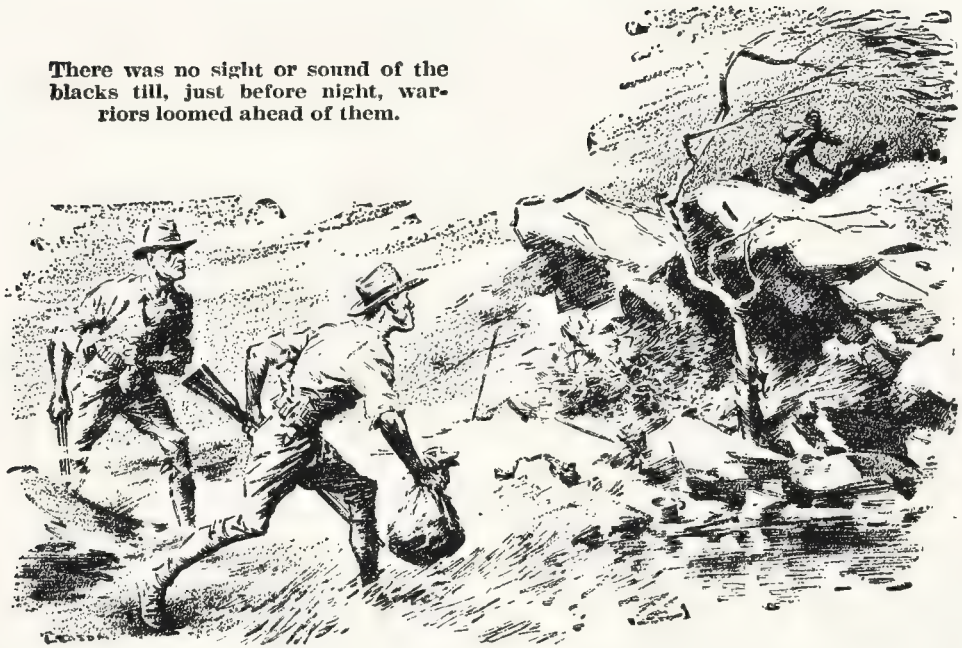
was a good sleeper in any kind of weather, and he knew it was day when he woke, because the dust was red again. But there was no sun, though the dust seemed thinner. The wind was blowing perhaps not quite so hard.

"Can't trek today either," he said to Morgan, before he discovered Morgan wasn't at the pack-dump.

He waited ten or fifteen minutes—long enough for Morgan to go to the water-hole and wash, if he didn't want to use the water out of a pack-barrel.



There was no sight or sound of the blacks till, just before night, warriors loomed ahead of them.



Then, when there was still no sign of his track-mate, Emmet got up and went toward the water-hole.

Morgan was at the dead man's camp with a shovel, and the body wasn't in sight now. There were stones where the grave was, so dingoes would leave it alone. "We'll cache his packs here, and leave them for the trooper," Morgan said. "You go back and shake up some breakfast."

"In this dust!"

"Well, we've got to eat. Had no supper. You can make a fire in the shelter of the dump."

Emmet went back and built the fire, and put a quart-pot of water on to boil. There was some corned beef, but he would wait for Morgan before he unwrapped it, because he daren't uncover anything for long. The pack-dump itself was half-buried by now in a dust-drift. They'd probably have to dig everything out by the end of the day. The wind might drop before night, but he'd known these dust-storms to last for a week or more. Sometimes, when white-hot, eye-dazzling heat blazed over the land, Emmet longed for the dust to shut out the sun; but when the land was dark with dust, and his eyes stung and watered, he decided the heat was a lesser hell. Actually, he was inured to both, because he was twenty-eight years old and had trekked over most of the Australian interior, which is dust and sun, and then sun and dust, and hardly ever rain. His great ambition was to buy a farm down on the coast, but he had never had an

opportunity of getting the money—not an honest one. And he hated crooks. . . . Where the blazes was Morgan?

The water was boiling, and he made the black, milkless tea of the desert—the tea that's stronger than the taste of bad water, and also disguises its dirty color. And then he went to hurry up Morgan.

He found him squatting on his heels beside a hole he'd dug in the sand. There was something he'd taken out of the hole. Emmet looked at it and said:

"So we better not wait for the wind to quit. We'll head straight through for a police post, and take that gold in. It's too much to leave around."

Morgan hadn't seen him there. Morgan jumped at his voice. "Oh—yes," he said, recalling his thoughts. "I reckon we better. . . . Gosh, it's a lot!"

It was a lot. It was Emmet's farm, but because he was the man he was, all he could do was curse the fact that here was another opportunity in his life that wasn't honest.

"Come on," he said; "let's eat and go."

EMMET saw the tribesmen first. They were just specters in the haze of dust. They didn't look real, and he never saw them for long. There was a big camp around somewhere, evidently, was his first thought, but his second and subsequent thoughts went away from that explanation. A camp was a thing that stayed put, even a nomadic tribesmen's camp. It didn't move along the trail with you all the time, as these shadows did.

"It's a tribe on the move," he said to Morgan. "But they're moving too close to us, for my liking. Want the camels or the tucker-bags, maybe."

"Why's a tribe move in this dust if it doesn't have to, anyway? Where's the women and kids? Everyone I've got any sort of a sight of is a warrior, all done up to kill. They can ambush the camel-string in this dust. Better start shooting and make 'em stand clear."

"In that dust you can't stand 'em back out of spear range. Just got to trust to luck."

"I never did trust to that any time I didn't have to," Morgan said. "A feller can't take any chances in a desert."

"Those blacks aren't the desert."

"They're part of it. Stone Age primitives. Can't trust 'em. Can't trust anything out here. Got to watch out all the time, if you don't want the desert to get you."

WHEN the red dust turned black and camp was made, all the camels were ground-hobbled, and Emmet took the first watch. The shadows had gone with the day, but a voice came with the night:

"No shoot, white feller. Me no cheeky feller boy."

Emmet looked for the boy with the voice, but he never did see him even vaguely. He heard only the voice.

"What name you?" he asked.

"Me sit down alonga white camp one time. White boss him been die dead. Me go-back to tribe. Now black-fellers want'm *kamillie* and pack-bags. No like it, me."

"You want to come into this camp?"

"No. But me tell'm this: White-feller sit down alonga you got gold. Me bury gold; him take'm up. More better put down gold."

Emmet was trying to understand it. The black boy had been with the white man who had died. When the white man died, the black boy buried the gold. He touched nothing at the packs, so he was no thief. He went back to his tribe. Some of the old men evidently felt he had passed up a good opportunity to bring camels and food with him, and the tribe had come to the camp, looking for the camels and the food. The camels had gone and there were no tracks in the windswept dust, except fresh tracks of camels. And the black boy, who had buried the white man's gold, had found it wasn't there.

"You think we steal the gold?" Emmet asked.

"No know'm. But more better take the gold back. Old men belonga tribe no like white-fellers take the gold."

Emmet said: "And if we took the gold back and left it in the ground, would the spearmen stop following the camels?"

"Yes, they stop," the black said.

"And if we don't take the gold back, they're sure to follow? That it?"

"They follow the white man with the gold. They kill'm *kamillie*," the black answered.

When the black had gone, Emmet woke Morgan and told him of the visit.

Morgan said: "The dust and wind get a man down; when the sun shines you'll think different about the gold. You won't want to dump it to please a bunch of blacks."

"We've got to choose between the gold and our camels," Emmet argued. "The blacks'll leave our camels alone if we take the gold back."

"They'll leave 'em alone, anyway. We'll teach 'em they've got to."

"You can't stop spears and boomerangs when you can't see 'em, and a camel's a big target. The gold isn't ours. We leave it back there, and tell a trooper about it. It's his affair."

"Supposing somebody else gets the stuff before a trooper comes along?"

"It wouldn't be our fault. Anyway, it's not likely."

But Morgan would take the gold along. "We'll get the camels through, if we keep our heads. Surprised at you, Emmet, getting rattled."

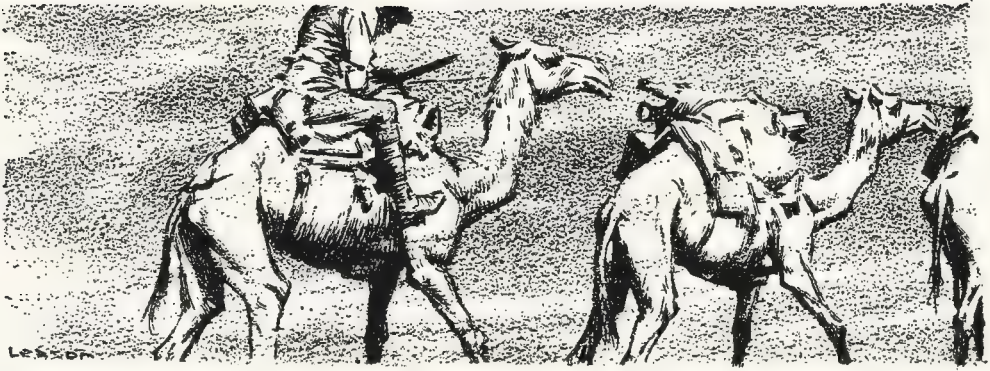
"All I'm doing is making sure of things, the way you so often suggest. It's that, or go on and trust to luck—and you say you never trust to luck in the desert. It's what you're doing this time," Emmet argued.

"No more than I have to. Blacks don't bluff me, that's all. And this wind might quit in the morning."

THE wind didn't quit. The dust was just as thick. And the tribesmen were still there, seen now and now not seen, and always vague, nebulous, unreal.

But you knew they were real. You could hear them calling to each other at times, and at other times you heard their war-yells and jeers. Morgan didn't know much of that tribal dialect, and Emmet only a little more. Yet his cheeks burned at those scornful jeers. But what could a man do in dust like fog?





Mighty little. . . . Mighty little even when a camel fell, rolling and roaring in a tangle of great plunging beasts that shed packs in confusion. The speared camel was in the middle of the string, and as he cut noselines Emmet could hear Morgan cursing and shooting. As if there was any use in that! Hold the camels! Join that broken string up again, with the fallen one cut out of the middle. It was a job for two men in that howling fury of wind, and he yelled at Morgan to help him. But the three camels that tailed the file got away, packs and all, what they hadn't shed. Spearmen got behind them and kept them running.

"Never see those camels again!" Emmet lamented. "Two of 'em were mine. Cost me forty pounds at Wiluna."

"We've got three left," Morgan said.

"And the gold!"

"And the gold. . . . Load those shed packs, and we'll go on."

"Anyway," Emmet said, "it's no good taking the gold back now. Blacks start a thing like this, and they'll go through with it. They got blood in their noses. Wise thing to do is camp and sit guard on the camels till we can see what we're heading into."

"No. They know where a camp is. We might dodge 'em in the dust."

Emmet didn't think so. The blacks kept down-wind, moving with the scent of the camels. But down-wind wasn't always the direction to watch for them. When they let fly with spears and boomerangs, it was not against the wind, nor with the dust splashing in their eyes. Emmet's eyes were full of it every time he faced the wind. A man was blind more than half the time. And if it hadn't been for that gold they'd be sheltering in a camp now, waiting for this to blow over.

Morgan halted the camels. "Look, what's got to be done is, one of us has to walk ahead. Just enough ahead of the

camels to crack open an ambush before the camels walk into it. We'll take it in turns. Who goes first?"

Emmet said: "I don't suppose it matters. They won't try boomeranging us till they've speared the camels, and maybe not then. But I don't think it'll save the camels, if they mean to get them. That's all there's to it—how far they mean to go."

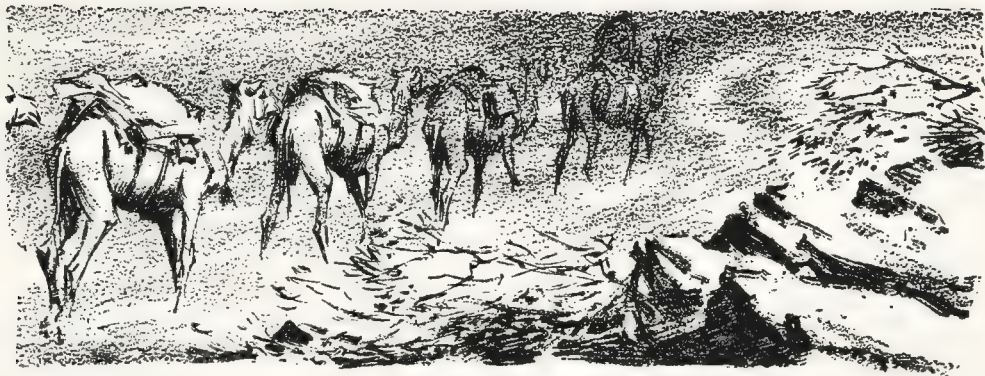
"I'd be more cheerful," Morgan suggested. "What's making you drop everything?"

"The gold we didn't drop," Emmet said. "But it don't matter now. . . . Follow up, and we'll see what happens."

Nothing happened to Emmet. He never even saw any blacks, nor heard any till they came yelling in a rear attack.

Speared camels roared and Morgan started his useless shooting again. Emmet ran back, and there were the camels, all of them on the ground. The spears had been quick and savage, but Morgan hadn't been hit. Boomerangs dropped near for the first time, as warning that now there were no more camels to spear boomerang-men might be left to mop up humans. Emmet was too angry to care. What stuck in his head was the thought that all his camels, the four he had owned in the lost string of seven, now were dead. Eighty pounds' worth. It'd be a long time before he got an outfit together again, and the farm on the coast was farther away than ever.

MORGAN seemed hardly able to believe it had happened. He was so smart in the desert, and planned everything out so carefully, leaving nothing to luck unless he had to, that now he was shocked by the sudden completion of the catastrophe. A few camels speared—that might happen to any man; but the whole string dead and nothing to carry packs and water to say nothing of his own perishable body—



Emmet said: "It was easy enough when they could smell where the camels were and we couldn't see where they were. They meant to stop us, and they did, that's all."

"If it hadn't been for the wind and dust—"

"Sure, but there was the wind and dust. And the gold too."

"You needn't rub that in. Maybe if I'd taken it back. . . . But I wasn't going to let blacks bluff me. Not going to now. We'll get through. It's not more than forty miles to Nopara Soak."

"And sixty beyond to the next water, and fifty to the next, and seventy to the next—dry stages like that all the time. On foot it's no joke."

**T**HEY took from the packs as much food as they could carry, and as many water-bags. When they started off in the choking dust, they bore quite a load apiece, and Morgan had the gold as well. Emmet was in the lead, and they marched one behind the other hour after hour, and never saw the sun. Emmet set his course by the wind, which had been westerly in the beginning, and probably was from the southwest by now. A man would fetch up in sand ridges finally, and go south with the north-and-south ridges to Nopara Soak. Emmet knew the country. So did Morgan. They both felt badly about losing their camels, and from Wiluna to the coast men would tell them—if indeed they ever got there—that they couldn't have been very smart, letting the blacks get all their camels.

For a long time there was no sound nor sign of the blacks, and Emmet thought they might have quit, but he wasn't as sure about it as Morgan, who seemed almost cheerful till, just before the red dust turned black with night, a couple of warriors loomed ahead and laughed at them.

They'd vanished before Morgan could aim but he fired the way they'd gone.

Emmet told him: "Leave the bullets out of it. You don't hit anything but dust, and what good would it do you if you did? There's plenty of 'em to play hide and seek, and keep on following us."

"They'll quit when the dust does."

In the night-camp Emmet saw, for a few minutes at least, a bunch of stars. And in the morning, the rising sun was visible—a dull coppery disk that you could look at without any dazzle in your eyes. Emmet watched it for some time. It got brighter, and then duller, and then for a long time was just about visible. When it vanished he felt disheartened.

"We could sit down here and wait for better weather," he said, "but all the time we'd be eating into our grub-bags and using up water and getting nowhere. We lost our chance to camp when we lost our camels."

"Blame me!" Morgan said. "But it was your idea in the first place to take the gold to a police post."

"I abandoned the idea when I knew we'd never get it through. After that talk with the black, I knew it was a bad bet."

"That black sticks in your head!"

Emmet told him: "Not only that—but the dead man's letter that blew out of your hand—I picked it up. It's here in my shirt pocket, and it's to his wife. He told her about the gold, and how she'd be all right for money. You didn't tell me the truth about that letter. I would hate to think that you mightn't have had any idea of taking that gold to a police post."

Morgan, a wraith in the wind and haze, and with squinting, weeping eyes and a mouth that was only a line in dust that gummed to sweaty skin, swore at him. "You're a fool! Eighty pounds' worth of your own camels lost and outfit as well, and all this hell in the wind . . . What's the good of the damn' gold to that man back at the camp?"



"To his wife—"

"All right. You wanted to take that gold back to the camp—"

"Because I thought even if we got it through, she mightn't see it. Not if you had your way."

Morgan said: "There's enough of the gold for the woman, and for you and for me. In that letter Raynor never said how much there was. I want compensation for those lost camels and outfit."

"That much," said Emmet, "might be honest, but I wouldn't want payment for what any man ought to do. You never kept your mind hard enough on what you ought to do. It's a lot of gold, and you want it . . . How long've we been camp-mates? Eighteen months. All that time I never knew how you were made up. It's time we parted company, maybe."

"A man don't desert his camp-mate in a dust storm, and with camels lost, and black-fellows around."

"No," Emmet agreed. "We'll stick together, so far as those natives can see. But that's all."

AT last they came to the sand ridges that lay athwart the route of the sun they seldom saw, and they followed the sand ridges to rock ridges and water. And the black men were here too, and it was here that the camp was raided.

Emmet managed to save one grub-bag, containing a few pounds of flour and some tinned meat. Morgan saved the bag of gold.

"Well, they ought to leave us alone now," Morgan said. "They've got most of the grub, so there's nothing much for them to come back for."

"Except the gold."

"What would they do with it if they got it?"

Emmet said: "Well, it's why they're following us, and has been all along."

"If they don't want whites to get it, why didn't they follow Raynor?"

"Maybe they did follow—till Raynor died."

Morgan said: "If they trailed Raynor it'd be for grub, and they've trailed us for the same reason. They'll leave us alone when there's nothing around to eat."

"That won't be long, either. Tomorrow, wind and dust or not, we've got to shift on."

Morgan kept a less and less wary eye for tribesmen during the day, but the incessant wind and dust had begun to wear on his nerves. He grew fretful, and then was silent and apathetic, sitting with

his back to the wind and a sheltering rock, and the gold in the bag constantly beside him.

Emmet saw him dimly through the dust-haze before the light of day went, and was glad then that he didn't see him. He wanted to forget Morgan and the gold and the lost outfit. Things were bad enough without letting his mind dwell on why they were so. You trekked for eighteen months with a man you thought of as a friend and a man you trusted—and then a dead man and a bag of gold left nothing quite the same. Emmet had a sour taste in his mouth, and it was not merely because he had lost his camels and outfit, and his hopes of a farm on the coast, and might even lose his life. These things were part of the gamble, but Morgan, who had shared his food and his camp, had hit below the belt. Emmet would not trek with a man again without wondering if he mightn't turn out to be another Morgan.

But he never thought of disobeying the unwritten law which binds two men to each other in trackless places where a man left to fight alone is a man sometimes left to die alone. Morgan was crooked, but he was white and civilized. The menace was black and barbaric—painted men with flat noses and the smell of blood in them.

That night, when the tribesmen came, quite as Emmet expected and Morgan only half expected, Emmet was ready and Morgan not so ready. But in darkness as deep as that of an unlit mine, the flash of a rifle only showed the enemy where you were and never hit him except by accident. The tribesmen followed their boomerangs and spears, piling in invisibly and undetected till you felt their greasy naked bodies upon you.

EMMET fought with clubbed rifle and knew by Morgan's angry curses that he fought likewise. But it was all pandemonium and barbaric frenzy and nightmare—a senseless confusion, out of which finally Emmet untangled himself, and listened to a night that was silent now, save for the wind which ceaselessly moaned and whined.

Morgan was swearing. "Where's that damned camp? They beat us back off it, didn't they?"

In the dark it was hard to see where the camp was or where they were. "Anyway, they didn't get us, and I'm not much hurt if you aren't," Emmet said. "Blacks like cover, but they don't like too dark a

night. They want to see what they're doing."

"I couldn't hold that gold and use a gun. Look for the bag!"

Emmet said: "I don't have to do that. You brought the gold along. I don't want to touch it. Anyway, maybe the blacks got the gold, and you can't see for sure till dawn."

**T**HERE was no sleep for either man, and they watched the darkness and listened, but there were no more blacks before the dawn nor afterward.

Morgan swayed about in the wind, looking for the gold. There was no sign of it, save a yellow patch where some had spilt in the sand. Morgan thought it all might have spilled from a burst bag, and spent a long time on his knees, gathering the sand up into his hat. He recovered a little gold, all mixed up with sand, but it was certain the bulk of the gold had not been lost.

"It's no use to them," Morgan raged. "I'll go back and get it. I know where they'll leave it."

"Where?" Emmet asked.

"In that hole I got it out of," Morgan returned. "Raynor's boy buried it near him when he died. I ought to have seen it before—the way a black-fellow's mind works! Raynor was taking the gold out of the desert. He died without any wound—died of sickness. Blacks don't understand sickness. If anybody dies without a wound, it's *kaditcha*, the work of an evil spirit or a god. They'd see it as a god. A god struck Raynor down because he was taking the gold out of the tribe's territory. Get it?"

"Yes."

"Then other whites come and take the gold away, and that makes angry the god that struck Raynor down—a witch-doctor would explain that, and why, to please the god, the tribe had to stop us

getting away with the gold. Does it make sense or not?"

Emmet knew how a black's superstitious mind worked, even better than did Morgan. "It's why they were so determined. Figure it out any way you like, and it's the only reason why they'd want the gold—the only use it is to them. To satisfy an angry god. Funny it never occurred to you before."

Morgan said: "It did to you, blast you! It's what made you so sure there was no chance of getting the stuff through. You knew all the time!"

Emmet looked at the one grub-bag that remained out of all their outfit. "A man," he said at last, "can take chances in the desert, and if they're honest ones and he loses out, he can feel it's just bad luck. Bad luck's clean. You wouldn't take any chances till another man's gold burned your fingers, and now you've lost, you've got to look as if you like it."

**M**ORGAN also looked at the grub-bag. "I haven't lost," he answered fiercely. "That gold'll be buried back where I found it alongside Raynor, if I know them superstitious blacks. I'll go back and get it."

"Without camels! And with almost no grub!"

"I've got a rifle. I'll live off the country—and water-holes are close enough to give me a chance on foot. I'll get it."

Emmet's hand lifted a gun that severed completely and for all time the ties of mateship that had held them together through good times and lean on the long trails in the dust and the sun and the wind.

"You'll never get it," he said, "because it's staying there by Raynor till a trooper fetches it out for that little widow down in Kalgoorlie. Get going! Walk ahead of me; it's where you'll always walk—till we quit using the same trail!"

Another picturesque story of Australia by Louis Kaye will appear in an early issue.



The illustrator calls attention to the typical "black-fellow's" use of his prehensile toes to drag his spear along after him.





**Dog-weary men, blurred to all reason, let go easily. They were at it, all over the deck, and the fight was fo'c'stle style with nothing barred. When at last Dent got his hook fast in Gorman's belt, he could pound Gorman almost at will.**

# Gold Ahoy!

*A stirring novel of the wild old days in California and the Pacific.*

By GORDON KEYNE

## *The Story Thus Far:*

**F**OR Abner Dent of Marblehead, a short run ashore in the San Francisco of gold-rush days was enough. He had no mind to waste money on the high-priced food and lodging of the diggings, and he frankly preferred the clean orderly life on a calked deck to the turbulent mobs of armed men and the uncertain gold gamble of the back country. In San Francisco Bay lay many a tall ship empty, all hands gone to the gold-camps; and what ships did leave port paid almost incredible wages.

And then he met and befriended Mary Clum, who was masquerading as a boy while she searched for her missing father, Captain Ezra Clum, a Marblehead ship-master. Nahiena was her name, she told him—a Sandwich Island name. "My mother was a missionary's daughter there," she told Abner. "We went to Valparaiso when I was a child. Father settled us there; you see, he had his reasons. But Mary's my name also, if you like that better."

They learned that Captain Clum had been shanghaied aboard a ship bound for Honolulu, and Nahiena announced that she must go to seek him at once—he was in terrible danger. She found passage offered on the *Eliza*, a ship bound for the Sandwich Islands; Abner Dent signed on as mate, taking along the former actor Thady—now Ezra Clum's factotum.

Before the ship sailed, however, a British soldier of fortune, Sir Francis Fairhaven, sought Dent out and tried to buy his help in a daring scheme—a "play for a throne," he described it. And a weird old witch of an island woman named Keave, who was with Fairhaven, brought up the name of Nahiena. Puzzled, Dent refused to join Sir Francis—at least until he knew more. "What's your interest in Cap'n Ezra Clum's daughter?" he asked.

Sir Francis' voice was steely:

"She doesn't know it yet, but she's not his daughter. She's no more related to him than you are. Her father, Mr. Dent, was a king." (*The story continues in detail:*)

**A**ND I thought he was a man to tie to!" The unuttered words beat and beat upon Abner Dent's brain like the reiterant fall of surf across a coral reef.

"I've captained ships from China." Nothing wrong in that. A scoundrel? No proof of this appeared. A venture that held nothing dishonorable? Quite true, probably. However—

Hard, merciless labor by sun and wind and night-squall may punish and warp and maim the body; but it may wash the brain clear and keen. In that long moment as he puffed his pipe, looking from glinting blue eyes to glinting gold, Dent came to his decision. He himself had done mad, wild things up and down the seas; smuggling, fighting, filibustering, drinking, loving. . . . He was a normal man, this Yankee with the missing hand, a hard man, an able man. Efficiency never comes by cheating God, man or devil. And he could feel a loose screw in another man, even if he could not see it.

"So there's the gold, in earnest of all I say." Sir Francis put down his pipe. "Perhaps I've said too much—no matter."

"It matters a good deal," Dent made slow reply. He knocked out his own pipe and pocketed it. "What was the meaning of that woman's mummery in the next room?"

"Eh? I'm sure I don't know. What did Keave do?"

"Don't lie; you left me with her for a reason," Dent said calmly. "Sir Francis, you lied to Nahiena about her father."

"Nonsense, Dent!" The reply was curt and crisp. "I've explained that."

"Aye," assented Dent, with a nod. "A play for a throne, say you. Keave links



her name with a yellow feather robe, a cloak such as only one of the royal blood may wear. Her father was a king, say you; here's French gold, you work for France and the Emperor—he will be emperor, even if he hasn't taken that title yet. Prince Napoleon, they call him. I heard a Frenchman downtown today call him Napoleon the Little, who cheated his way to a throne."

Sir Francis drew back thin lips over strong white teeth.

"For a Yankee sailor, you show extraordinary discernment—but in the wrong way! You can hear evil and envious things spoke of any man who's made his mark."

"I don't like cheaters," Dent replied calmly. "Discernment? No. I only take what's put before me and make the best of it. From what I see of you and your doings, Sir Francis, they're no affairs of mine."

"I told you the venture was honorable!" rasped Sir Francis. "Yet you quarrel with fame and fortune I offer you?"

Dent smiled. "No. I don't quarrel with you or your offer; I give you thanks for the chance. It doesn't suit me, that's all."

"You mean, if you dared say it, that I don't suit you!"

"You said it, not I," Dent's browed features stiffened. "However, it's true."

Sir Francis stared at him in mingled amazement and anger, baffled by this shrewd, calm lack of emotion. The blue eyes cooled and cooled until they were like ice; they had no share at all in the sudden laugh that came to the thin lips.

"Be damned if I don't admire your plain speaking once more! The offer's made and refused, and that settles the matter. Come, man! We can still be friends; here's my hand on it, and no hard feelings!"

"Gladly," replied Dent. He put his hand out, and Sir Francis gripped it, then poured a drink and lifted his glass.

"Better luck tomorrow than today, Mr. Dent, and a fair wind to the *Eliza*!"

They drank the toast. Dent took his departure, passing through the outer room. A lamp burned there now; the room was empty—no hag, no bones, no yellow feather robe. Nothing.

A FEELING of crawly horror followed him as he walked down the street, his thoughts busy. He could not rid himself of it. The old witch had been reality. A former priestess of the island gods, Sir

Francis had said. Her trickery had been reality too—or else he was a victim of illusion. He squared his shoulders and resolved to think of it no more, and so put it out of his mind.

"No hard feelings? I'd like to be sure of that," he told himself gloomily. "A devil as cold and merciless as a crimp's heart was looking out of his eyes when he shook hands. And I thought he was a man to tie to! I know better now. What about Nahiena?"

Careful, now, he reflected. This was none of his business. It was hers. Upon this sensible reflection, he gained the hotel, went to his room, and turned in. So she was not Captain Clum's daughter at all? Or had Sir Francis lied? Thereupon he fell asleep.

HE joined Nahiena at breakfast. She was vivacious and excited; was this not their last day in San Francisco? While they were at table, Captain Whidden walked in. With him were two of his passengers, black-clad earnest men from New Salem, going out to join the missionary forces in the islands.

Dent seized the occasion to introduce Whidden to his fair passenger. The whole party sat down again together. That the girl knew anything of the islands was of course not suspected; she was Miss Mary Clum, traveling to join her father. The talk was brisk, and Dent found it unexpectedly interesting. When someone mentioned the fact that within a few months California would be admitted as the thirty-first State of the Union, one of the missionaries shook his head sadly.

"Would that I could say the same of the Sandwich Islands!" he observed. "Our friends there write that the future seems gloomy indeed. Both France and England appear intent upon seizing the islands."

"That's nothing new," said Whidden. "I was there six years ago when an English squadron annexed them; the action was disavowed and independence restored three months later. And the French have been making demands and claims for the past ten years; they talk like a house afire and do nothing—that's your Frenchman all over."

"Still, affairs are threatening," put in the other missionary. "Kamehameha has been on the throne for twenty-five years—the third of the name. They say he's in very poor health, thanks to his inebriate habits, and the succession is cloud-

ed. No one knows what would happen if he dies. Keave tells us the throne may go to a woman."

"Who did you say?" asked Dent sharply. "What was that name?"

The missionary turned to him. "Keave—an island woman who has been in New England during the past year, and is now returning home aboard our ship. A most interesting female, who illustrates in her person the highest effects of saving grace! At one time she was a priestess of those savage, bloody idols which are now banished from the islands. Her eyes were turned to Zion, and since her conversion she has been a tower of strength to our brethren. She has great influence among the natives and has turned many of them to the light. A native of Maui, she spent many years serving the idols on the island of Hawaii, where savagery still lingers."

"Oh!" said Dent, in some astonishment. So the old hag was real, her presence explained; she probably came ashore each day, like the others aboard, while the barque had been here. A convert, was she? He wondered, with grim amusement, what these godly gentlemen would say to her deviltries of last evening. . . .

"Dent, I'd like a word with you in private," Captain Whidden said abruptly; and both men rose.

**T**HIS fantastic hotel of canvas and rough boards had a lounge or lobby adjoining its eating-room, a small space fitted with chairs reserved for guests only, as a large sign proclaimed. Finding it empty, the two seated themselves here, and Whidden regarded the Marblehead-er with severely uncompromising eyes.

"I don't waste words, Mr. Dent. I presume you're aware that the chief mate is usually in actual charge of a vessel, being a confidential person representing the master?"

"Such has been my experience, sir," Dent replied warily.

"Very good. I'll have you understand that, once aboard my barque, your time will be occupied with your duties, fully occupied. You'll have no occasion for lallydallying, and you'll take care not to address any passenger unless first spoken to."

"I'm aware of my duties," said Dent placidly. "And also of my rights."

"Hm! I've no doubt that your relations with Miss Clum are most praiseworthy," said Whidden, and his square-cut beard bristled. "But aboard ship they will cease, although the mate and the

master eat with the passengers. We have two other females aboard, and God knows I've had trouble enough on the passage around the Horn on their account! Luckily, they're married; but this young lady is not, and I shall permit no gallivanting of any description."

"I understand," Dent smiled. "You're entirely right, of course. If one of the officers were seen to be on friendly terms with a female passenger, it'd be a bad thing. You may count on my discretion to the fullest extent."

"I count on your obeying orders!" rasped Whidden; but he seemed relieved none the less. "You'll be aboard by six this evening, as engaged. We sail an hour later with the tide, and shall get out beyond the heads before darkness comes; I'll take no chances on staying another night and finding some of my hands missing in the morning."

"It's an unheard-of thing," he went on, "that the chief mate should be coming aboard at the final moment! I've had my hands full of things that should have been done by you. I don't know what the world's coming to, these days! The whole earth's upside down."

"Cap'n Henry Dixon of Marblehead used to say that a turnover in the world was a sign o' growth," observed Dent. "Those who adjust themselves to it quickest, end the best."

Whidden surveyed him critically.

"Well, I've received a hint of your proposed activities in the islands," he said. "It's none of my affair what you do there; others have made whopping big piles in the same line, and I wish you no ill-luck. But if I were you, Mr. Dent, I'd make sure of my ground-tackle before I closed in on a lee shore. Good day to you."

Whidden strode back into the dining-room, leaving Dent amazed, speechless.

**P**ROPOSED activities? What was the man driving at? Frowning, he rose and followed, only to find Whidden and the others departing. There was no chance to question further. But a hint came when Nahiena turned to him, smiling.

"Apparently rumor's at work, Abner! I hear that you and Father are projecting some sort of business in the islands; because you've inquired after him, and are now with me, people have jumped to hasty conclusions."

Dent's face cleared. "That explains it, of course! This town is a hotbed of insane projects and schemes and gossip. Well, let it pass. What are your plans?"



"To lay in a stock of cloth, and make a dress or two before we reach Honolulu," she rejoined. "I'll have to learn not to say *Honoruru* any more, too; evidently there are a lot of changes ahead. What are you going to do?"

"Take a chair in the reception lobby next door, and enjoy doing nothing. I'll have plenty to keep me on the jump in a few more hours."

As Nahiena refused his escort, he saw her off and then made himself comfortable in a corner chair of the hotel lobby. Something had popped into his mind.

"Just why did that slick Britisher have the Cap'n shanghaied?" he mused now, thoughtfully. "He never said. I meant to ask him, and forgot. Wasn't for robbery, sure; wasn't just for mean cussedness, not that kind o' man. Offered me a sight o' money to work ship for him; why? Said I'd be worth my salt; didn't say why or how. Certainly looks fishy to me. If she's not Clum's daughter, whose is she? King's daughter? That's all poppycock."

He broke off; hearing his name spoken, he glanced around. A man was asking



for him at the desk; the clerk was pointing him out. The man approached; he was about forty, with bushy side-whiskers and keen, shrewd features. His attire was of the best. Dent set him down as a prosperous business man.

"Mr. Abner Dent of Marblehead?" he asked pleasantly. "My name's Kennedy. I have a mercantile and wholesale house here. I was told I might find you at this hotel."

Dent shook hands. "Who told you?"

Kennedy was startled at this directness. "Well, your name—mentioned in conversation—on behalf of my clients—"

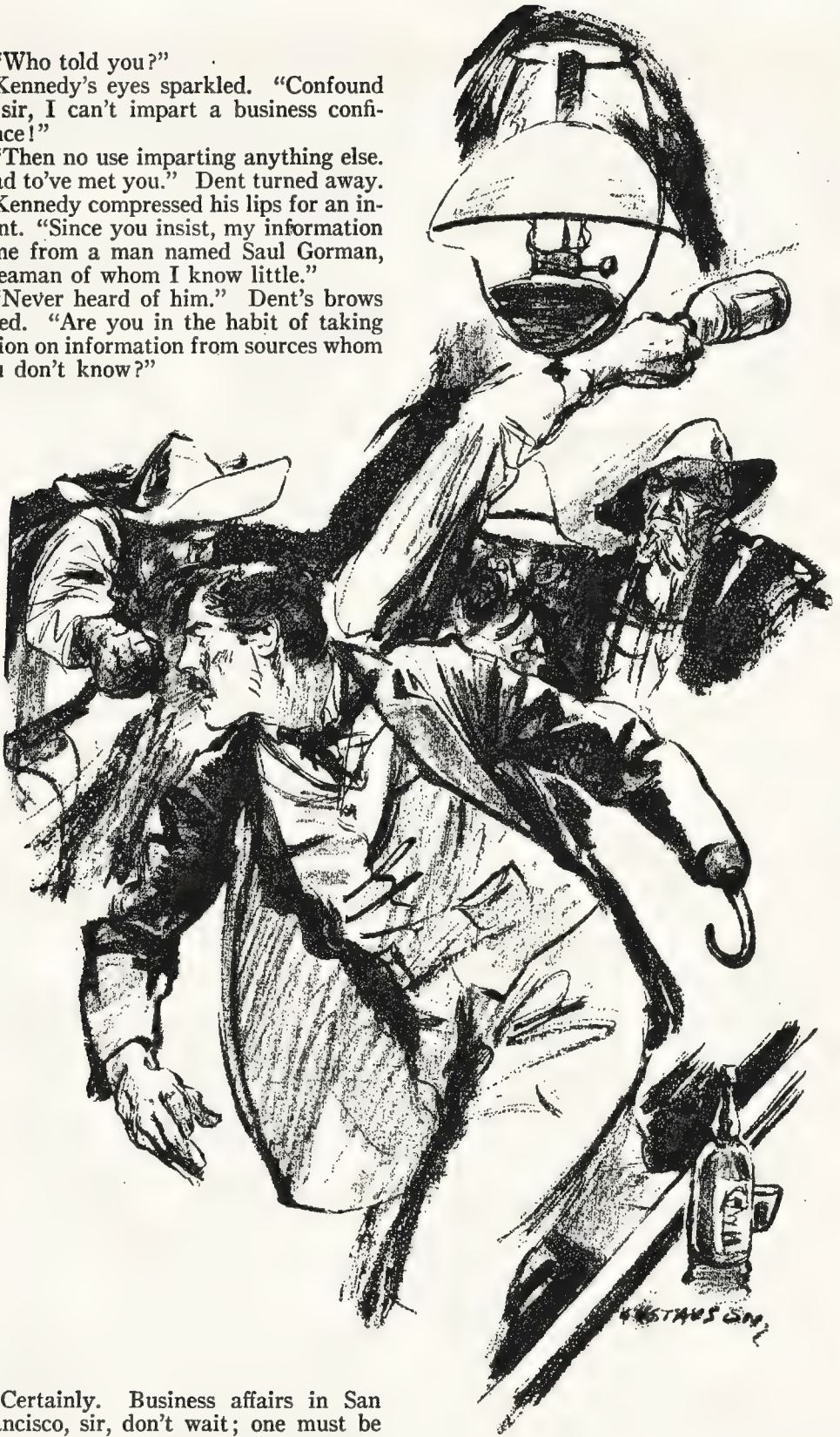
"Who told you?"

Kennedy's eyes sparkled. "Confound it, sir, I can't impart a business confidence!"

"Then no use imparting anything else. Glad to've met you." Dent turned away.

Kennedy compressed his lips for an instant. "Since you insist, my information came from a man named Saul Gorman, a seaman of whom I know little."

"Never heard of him." Dent's brows lifted. "Are you in the habit of taking action on information from sources whom you don't know?"



"Certainly. Business affairs in San Francisco, sir, don't wait; one must be on the alert to seize any tip and act swiftly. Rumor today is a deal consummated tomorrow."

Dent saw a glitter of knives, saw a pistol swing up. . . . Savagely he smashed into them.



"I can understand that. Well, sit down and let's have it; but I'm not in business."

"So I gather." Kennedy took a chair and offered cigars, biting at one himself. "I have numerous clients in the islands, Mr. Dent, whose affairs I handle. I've been here fifteen years; you'll find that I have a fairly substantial reputation."

"I don't doubt it sir." Dent smiled. "But why should you seek me out?"

"Perhaps to advance your own interests. Do you know the islands well?"

"Slightly."

Kennedy chuckled. "Garrulous New Englander, eh? A good sign; I dislike a man who talks too much. Well, in the past dozen years or so conditions in the islands have undergone great changes. Their commerce, the direction of their affairs, are largely in the hands of white settlers, many of whom have intermarried with the natives and amassed huge properties. Naturally there are jealousies, quarrels, dislikes."

HE paused as though inviting comment. Dent made none; he wondered what the devil this visitor could be driving at.

"The present king," resumed Kennedy, "is in no physical condition to live much longer. Affairs in the islands are approaching a crisis in several directions. Dissension threatens. The missionaries, while exerting tremendous influence generally, have no voice whatever in the government; the merchants and land-owners and royal family do not listen to them. I suppose you know, Mr. Dent, that the royal family constitutes practically a distinct race?"

Dent nodded. "I know they're far different from the Kanakas they rule; highly intelligent, and so forth. May I ask why you're favoring me with this sermon?"

"To inform you that I believe certain of my clients will be interested in backing your proposals actively, with all necessary sums; and to offer you letters to them."

"Meaning what?" Dent frowned, perplexed. "You know I'm hoping to find Cap'n Clum?"

"I never heard of any Captain Clum," said the other testily. "And I may say that I don't relish your attitude, Mr. Dent. Caution may be carried too—Hello!" He broke sharply off, as at a sudden memory. "Clum, Captain Ezra Clum! That's strange. Yes, I heard of

him years ago, when I first came out from the East. I remember, now; there was some wild story about such a man. A desperate fellow of some kind. . . . It seems to me that he ran off with an island girl and kidnaped a child who was the daughter of the former king. Is that it? The memory is vague."

Dent whistled softly to himself at this information.

"Well, that has nothing to do with me," he said. "We seem to be at cross-purposes. I'm a sailor. I have no proposals, as you term them. I don't know what you're talking about."

Kennedy bridled. "If you refuse to speak frankly, let me warn you that you'd better think twice. Others will be as much interested in halting you, as I am in furthering you. In a word, Mr. Dent, you're walking in slippery places!"

"Thanks. I have good footing," said Dent; then his gaze struck at the other. "Perhaps you're a friend of Sir Francis Fairhaven—is that it?"

"I am not," retorted Kennedy stiffly. "I know the man, and believe him to be an arrant rascal. Frank Fairhaven, eh? He's said to have run hell-ships from China, packing them full of Chinese for the islands or for this coast, then running them to the guano islands down south and selling them into slavery. Thousands ended that way. Satan's own traffic!"

Dent sat up abruptly. He remembered now having heard of this frightful trade; and he remembered something else. "*I have captained ships from China!*" He turned to Kennedy.

"Tell me in a word what you want."

"Confound it, I've told you! I want to back your enterprise!"

"I have none," said Dent earnestly. "I'm sailing tonight; my only enterprise is to help Miss Clum find her father, who is in the islands."

KENNEDY rose, flushing angrily.

"Very well. If that's your final word, I've no more to say. But you'll regret it, sir, you'll regret it! You must be mad, deliberately to tempt death and refuse help!"

He stalked away indignantly. Abner Dent looked after him, reflectively, uneasily. This man was certainly no rogue. What the devil, then, was he talking about? And Saul Gorman, some seaman of whom he had never heard—

Dent now began to have the feeling that he had fallen into some sort of net that was tightening upon him with unseen

stricture. He had an impulse to go to Nahiena about it and put the whole thing in her hands for unraveling. It was not hard to guess that Sir Francis had some game to play in which she counted heavily.

"But no; she knows nothing about it," he told himself helplessly. "She's a mere girl, besides, and wouldn't be up to all these tricks. And I'm not the one to tell her Cap'n Clum isn't her father!"

Whidden had referred to his future activity in the islands. This man Kennedy had been worked up about it. What activity?

"Some crazy rumor, no doubt," he decided. "The town's full of insanity of that kind! Kennedy practically admitted as much. I needn't bother my head about it; another three or four hours will see me in a different world—ha! Thady would be the man to find out what it means; but he's aboard ship."

**D**ISMISSING the whole addled affair, Dent left the hotel and sauntered down the hill, jingling the coins in his pocket. A drink or two, a few purchases, and he would be ready to go whenever Nahiena showed up.

He had an uneasy notion that eyes followed him, that men turned and looked after him. They were talking about that brawl, and the hook on his left arm, he thought angrily; he was, at times, sensitive on the subject, being aware that the hook made him a marked man.

He turned into the first saloon that showed itself, and ordered a drink at the bar. Again he had the feeling that glances were directed at him, that men were discussing him. He tossed down his drink and turned, to find a man at his elbow addressing him.

"Want to take on a good hand, Mister? I've had my fill o' the diggings."

His gaze swept the man, a down-at-heel individual with unshaven features.

"Want to ship, do you? Ordinary seaman or A.B.?"

"I aint no sailor, Cap," was the reply. "But I can handle a gun. I fit in the Mexican war, I did! And I've done Injun scouting."

Dent laughed. "You'd better learn to hand, reef and steer before you ask me for work."

"You'll need some riflemen before you start a revolution in the islands, won't you?"

"Revolution?" echoed Dent, astonished. "Who do you take me for, friend?"

As he spoke, he was aware of the crowd standing about, a serried semicircle of men, eyes devouring him. One of them spoke up roughly.

"We know all about it, Cap. It's all over town, that you're raisin' a force to grab the islands."

"Well, I'm not!" broke in Dent angrily. "I'm chief mate of the barque that's sailing tonight. Somebody has been handing out a lot of lies, apparently."

A growl swept through the men. They pressed close. A voice bawled hotly:

"We know you! You're Iron-arm Banister, the shipmaster that killed three of his men and jumped for the digging! You hired men there and let 'em starve! Now you're heading for the islands! —Jump him, boys! Don't let him git away!"

In that one flashing instant, Dent saw that he was in for it. Absurd, impossible, insane as it seemed, they meant to do him in; this was no accident, but deliberate. It made no sense, but there it was!

Then he was at them, scooping a bottle from the bar with his right hand, going at their faces with steel hook and clubbed bottle, a grin of unleashed ferocity transforming his brown face. Mutinous crew or city thugs, there was only one way to handle them; hit them first and drive the fear of God into them!

He did it. Life or death, for some unknown cause. . . . He caught a glitter of knives, saw a pistol swing up. The man who held it screamed and went down as the bottle splintered on his head. The whole place was in mad uproar. Another pistol exploded, the bullet going wild. Savagely Dent smashed into them.

"Marblehead ahoy!" went up a yell from the doorway—someone he had met in Dixey's Restaurant. "Marblehead ahoy!" came a reply from outside. A new force swung into the struggling mob, hard fists battering men aside. Dent dropped his broken bottle and lashed out with hook and fist.

**T**HE throng split: Two Marblehead men, yelling wildly, others rushing in behind them from the street; it was a furious mêlée, with no weapons barred and no quarter given. Now the entire shack was a mass of battling men. Under the crushing weight of bodies the bar was knocked over, bottles and glass crashed. All hands were blindly flailing away without distinction.

Dent was joined by his two rescuers. The three bore down upon a rear en-



trance, gained it, and staggered out into the afternoon sunlight, while the fight roared on inside.

Five minutes later they were ensconced in Dixey's Restaurant, laughing and swearing and panting. The row was waxing stronger than ever, and was fast assuming the proportions of a riot.

"What started it, Dent?" asked one.

"Dummed if I know." Dent found himself bruised and sore, his jacket slit by one knife, his sleeve by another, but himself sound. "Seems like they took me for a man named Iron-hand Bannister."

"Oh!" The other two exchanged a look. One shook his head. "Not likely. He aint your build, though he did have an iron hand. He was hanged, anyhow, a couple months back. They didn't hardly take you for him. It was a put-up job, Dent. Those rats are all one gang. They heard you had money. I heard myself you'd made a killing at the tables. If some of us fellers don't get together and have a necktie-party, those rats are going to run Frisco!"

Presently he took himself back to the hotel, by a circuitous route that avoided the fringes of battle. Abner Dent was nobody's fool, even in a strange environment. This was something more than a mere gang-up to knock out and rob a man with money. Except for luck, he would now be a battered wreck of a man, waking on the morrow—if at all—to find himself stranded, and the barque gone.

Aside from having instigated the gang, someone was obviously spreading reports that he intended a revolution in the islands. No rumor was too absurd to gain instant credence in this city of rumors, where a word and a poke of gold-dust could start a thousand men on stampede. Who had started this report?

Saul Gorman—that name was sealed in mystery. Yet he believed Kennedy. He did not overlook Sir Francis Fairhaven, but could see no reason here; especially as Sir Francis had some such scheme in mind himself, it would seem.

"Deeper and deeper," he muttered, as he packed his duffel-bag. "There's a reason for everything; yet I can't find it here. I'm out of soundings. I'm tangled up with something—don't know what it is. If I were to put a name to the rogue back of it all, I'd say it was Sir Francis; still, that doesn't make sense, either."

Sir Francis, who had captained ships from China! Hell-ships more awful than any slavers from the Guinea Coast, packing yellow men by the hundreds to slav-

ery and disease and quick death; yet such a man could smile! Dent thought again of the handclasp at parting, and the blue eyes of merciless ice, and found himself shivering.

He went in search of Nahiena—found her packed and ready. He explained to her gravely what their position must be aboard ship, and she understood.

"Agreed, Abner!" she said. "All the way, I'll pretend I don't know you at all—and just to make up for the sorry pretence, here's what I really think of you!"

She reached up and kissed him on the lips—laughing, careless of who might see.

Dent was still speechless with the warm shock and rapture of it, when the boat put them aboard the barque and he found Saul Gorman awaiting him.

## Chapter Seven

"MR. DENT, shake hands with Mr. Gorman, our second mate."

"Not Saul Gorman?" queried Dent, shaking hands.

Captain Whidden grunted. "Right. You know each other already?"

"I believe so," Dent replied. Gorman said nothing at all, but looked startled.

Now, three days out from the Golden Gate, Abner Dent was thinking of that scene as he sat under the cabin lamp at the mate's most imperative task. Cap'n Whidden had approved the daily slate, and it was his job to enter up the account of the day's run from the slate into the logbook. He was free until he took the deck at midnight.

The barque was sailing close-hauled, under a light wind; the evening was warm and all the after crowd were on deck. Dent, alone with his thoughts, wrote mechanically; his mind was dealing with Gorman, and wondering.

A complete stranger, Saul Gorman was a hulking, powerful, black-bearded man, with matted hair on chest and arms, and heavy and humorless features. Since coming aboard, Dent had not exchanged a word with him except in the line of duty, and he knew Gorman was worried by this silence. Those darkly heavy eyes questioned him uneasily, furtively.

Why had Gorman spread that queer report of him? He meant to learn, in time. No hurry.

At a step, Dent glanced up. It was Thady, who had just finished cleaning the mess cabin, and was dragging himself dismally toward the companion ladder.

"Feeling any better?" queried Dent. "Getting your sea-legs at last?"

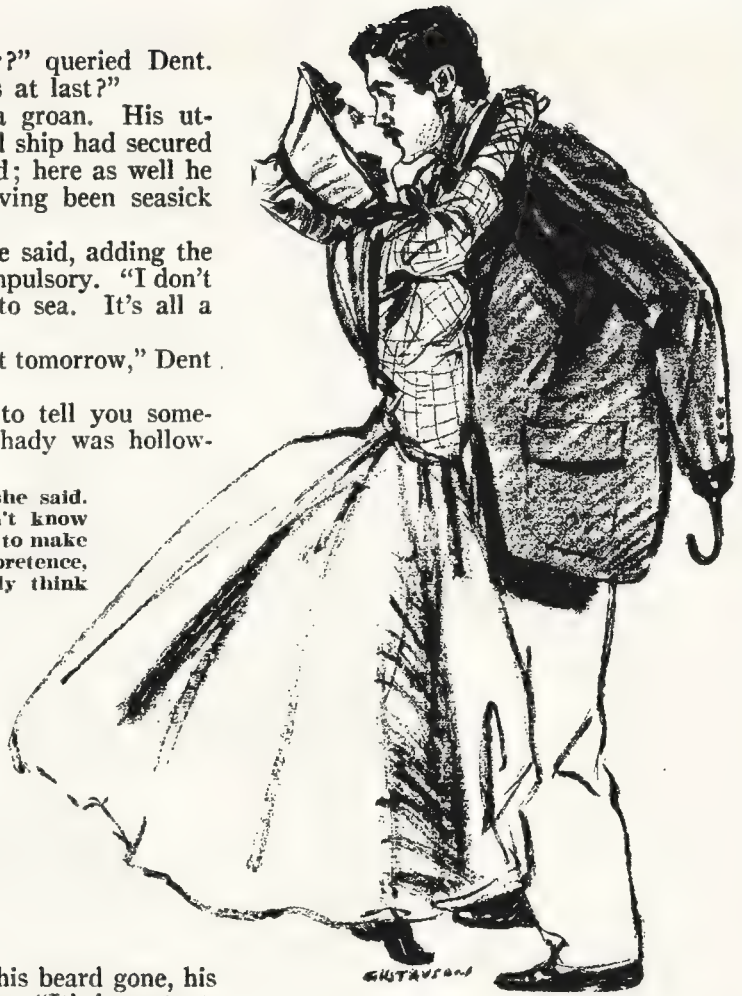
Thady suppressed a groan. His utter helplessness aboard ship had secured him the job of steward; here as well he was a futile soul, having been seasick continually.

"I think so—sir," he said, adding the word he had found compulsory. "I don't know yet how I got to sea. It's all a dream."

"I'll tell you about it tomorrow," Dent rejoined.

"And—and I have to tell you something, Mr. Dent." Thady was hollow-

"Agreed, Abner!" she said.  
"I'll pretend I don't know you at all—and just to make up for the sorry pretence, here's what I really think of you!"



cheeked and ghostly, his beard gone, his facial bones protruding. "It's important. About *you*. But I can't think now. I'm done to death."

Dent smiled. "You get a good night's sleep, and don't worry."

"Miss Clum didn't seem surprised to see me aboard here."

"No. Don't think about it now; get some rest. I'll clear up everything with you in the morning. Your money's safe and all's well."

Thady mumbled something and betook himself off, too miserable to know his own mind. Dent went on with his work. He had just made the last entry, sanded it, and wiped the slate clean, when Whidden came stamping down the ladder.

The Captain advanced to the table, settled himself in a chair purposefully, and gripped Dent with his dour gaze.

"I've been watching you," he said abruptly. "Mister, you're a sailor. Those lunar observations we took last night checked perfectly; your altitudes were exact."

"Thank'ee, sir," replied Dent, wondering at so rare a compliment. Whidden

was silent a space, tamping his pipe and getting it alight.

"I've dreamed two nights running of being took flat aback during a gale. I saw an English ship caught like that, off the China coast; her poles held, and she was forced right under like a toy ship. D'ye believe in dreams?"

"No, sir." Dent lighted his own pipe.

"No more do I. But I don't like 'em to come more'n once. It aint in nature, somehow. And the glass is going down. When you take over the deck, look out for any shift in the wind. And tomorrow's the Sabbath; our passengers will hold divine service at four bells in the morning watch. Better tell your watch to be ready in their best bib and tucker."

"Aye, sir."

"Good night to you." Whidden rose and stalked away.

Dent went on deck to finish his pipe, standing by the 'midships rail. A lantern was lit aft; the passengers were clumped there, talking and laughing. From some-



where forward came the whang of a concertina and the voices of Kanakas. There were five of the brown men in the crew.

Dent had not seen the woman, Keave, since coming aboard. He had exchanged a cordial nod with Sir Francis, without speech; Nahiena had avoided him, but her eyes had not. She was much in company with Sir Francis, but Dent noted that the latter held long and apparently serious conferences with the elder of the missionaries, who had been in the islands before this.

The glass falling? There was no indication of any change; the wind was steady; there was almost no sea running. Cap'n Whidden's dreams, thought Dent, must have been induced by the fresh meat he had recently eaten, having put a huge stock aboard at San Francisco—and made the most of it while it kept good.

Knocking out his pipe, Dent went below and turned in; he bunked aft, with the master. The chief mate took no share in the work as his subordinates did; nor did he share the aloof and Olympian dignity of the master; he was something betwixt and between, the visible sign of the usually invisible captain.

Dent was wakened suddenly, perhaps by the seaman's sixth sense.

Hearing six bells struck, he knew it was still an hour before his watch began. He turned over easily. At this instant he heard a chorus of strangled, frantic voices from the deck; then came one terrific crash that knocked Dent against the beams, and the barque heeled far over—so sharply, so far, that he was literally flung out of his bunk. He landed headfirst against the door, and the shock knocked him senseless, his last thought a wild horror of collision in the night.

There had been no collision, however.

CAPTAIN WHIDDEN, rushing up the ladder to the deck, stood for an instant appalled. The dire prophecy of his repeated dream had come true; an unexpected fury of wind sweeping through the darkness had caught the barque full aback.

The air was one moaning, keening shriek; a smother of foam and spindrift and water was bursting clear over the vessel. She had broached to and was lying very nearly on her beam ends, with tons of water pouring across her starboard rail and sweeping down the canted deck. The vessel suddenly shivered and shook, as at some inward shock; with awful certainty,

Whidden knew what it meant. The cargo had shifted, and would hold her down.

All this passed in one agonized eyeflash. Gorman appeared, yelling something. His voice was lost in crash upon crash overhead. From Whidden burst one terrible cry. Gorman saw him knocked into the night as the top-hamper came crashing down; he must have been killed instantly. The mizzen snapped at the gaff; yards and spars came down and smashed the quarter rail into matchwood, carried away wheel and housing, leaving stern rail and the stern itself a gaping ruin.

AN iron hand seized Gorman, pulled him into the lee of the starboard rail. The voice of Sir Francis blared: "Where's Cap'n Whidden? Where's Dent?"

"Gone—knocked overboard! Cargo's shifted; we must cut away the masts—"

"That's no way to right her if cargo's shifted!" roared Sir Francis. "Can you get out a hawser from the quarter. . . . No, the damned ship's going down under us, 'pon my word!"

So it seemed; the wall of water was bursting higher over her; the lee rail and the shattered stern were pressed down and down.

"Boats; get 'em launched in the lee. I'll fetch up the passengers."

"Aye," said Gorman helplessly. "Safe enough; the squall's going down now. But so's the barque. . . . Look! For God's sake!"

He thought she was gone, as her lee rail went under—and stayed. Flat on her beam ends now, the deck like a wall rising upright.

Frantically the two men went to work, Gorman with the crew, Sir Francis with the passengers. Of the sixteen men forward, some were gone but most were safe. The three boats were ample for everyone. In the pitch-darkness it was an inferno, but Gorman was efficient and Sir Francis a flame of energy; as the passengers clawed their way up the companion, the Englishman's voice steadied and guided them. Nahiena came screaming at him:

"Where is he? Abner, where are you?"

"Gone," said Sir Francis. "This way, now—"

She fell limp against him. He caught her, passed her to Gorman, passed the other two women. One boat got off and was whirled away. Gorman caught the arm of Sir Francis.

"You next! I'll take the last boat."

"Aye," responded Sir Francis. It was no time to argue. He dropped into the boat, dimly seeing women amidships, and took the tiller. The oars gave way; the boat fled into the lee of the barque, lifted on a breaker, and was tossed into the darkness. Gorman and four more men remained. The barque groaned and shivered, lurched downward, and cries broke from the men as they got aboard.

Gorman, himself terrified lest the sinking vessel suck them under, scrambled into the boat with an order to give way. A tremendous sea curled up over the weather rail and burst down upon them. The boat was filled instantly, filled and whirled against the mainmast and splintered into matchwood. The voices of dying men whirled off on the wind.

The vessel heaved up and righted slightly. Gorman's sheer bull strength saved him now; he had a line, was hauling himself out of the maelstrom. He came upon a gasping, struggling figure, and grabbed desperately; a man, clinging to him frantically. By main force, Gorman got the other aboard and crawled out himself. His brain still obsessed by the necessity of cutting away the masts, he found an ax and hewed at the fore and main stays. Aft, there was a crashing pound and pound of heavy spars under her stern—driving, splintering, shuddering through her. A burst of spray, and tons of water came heaving over the starboard rail. Gorman was caught and whirled end over end with the mass. His ax gone, he came to in a tangle of lines, stayed himself, and crawled forward for shelter, gasping and hurt and dazed.

But he had accomplished his intent. The barque heaved terribly. With a wrenching crackle, the foretopmast tore away; the mainmast followed; these, held to the vessel by the lee running rigging, pulled the spars from under her stern. She was gradually swerved around until her deck came into the full blast of wind and sea, for a space. Then the weight of all the wreckage forward, still gripped fast and pounding at her forefoot, had its effect. The broken and shattered stern was held in the lee of the seas. The barque righted a little, but she was helpless, stricken, a gaping wreck aft.

DENT came to life, conscious of a slow and soggy heave of the vessel—a movement alarming enough to any seaman. He was stiff, bruised and sore, and over his ear was a bump like an egg. No serious harm, apparently.

He sat up and looked around. . . . Then he remembered. Collision? But the gray light of morning was in the sky, and the barque seemed to be lying on her beam ends! The irregular thumping of spars against the hull told its own story.

His cabin door was locked. When he got it open, a small torrent of water gushed in from the passage. In sharp panic he scrambled for the ladder and so gained the afterdeck, sharply canted. There he came to a halt, appalled.

The *Eliza* wallowed on her port side, her rail almost at the water; the empty decks were swept clean. A fairly heavy sea was running, but the morning promised clear. The mainmast was a stump, splintered off a dozen feet above the deck. The fore and mizzen remained to the tops, but the yards and hamper lay massed under her forefoot. The stern was a splintered remnant of wreckage.

"The dream came true!" Dent muttered. "Took aback by a squall, cargo shifted, all hands lit out in the boats. . . . And here I am. Plenty of water in the hold, by the soggy feel of her. —Good Lord! Nahiena!"

JUMPING for the starboard mizzen shrouds, he gazed about. The horizon was empty, and a streak of crimson in the east told of the sun coming up. No sign of the boats. Dropping hastily below, he searched the cabins. The stern cabins were stove in and wrecked. All were empty. Scattered clothes told of wild confusion. In Nahiena's cabin were her garments, everything untouched; if she had left, it must have been in her night-gear. He returned to the deck.

Not Whidden's way to abandon ship in panicky haste, he thought. Well, facts were facts. He was alone; the barque was sinking; and unless he did something, there was the devil to pay! But what to do?

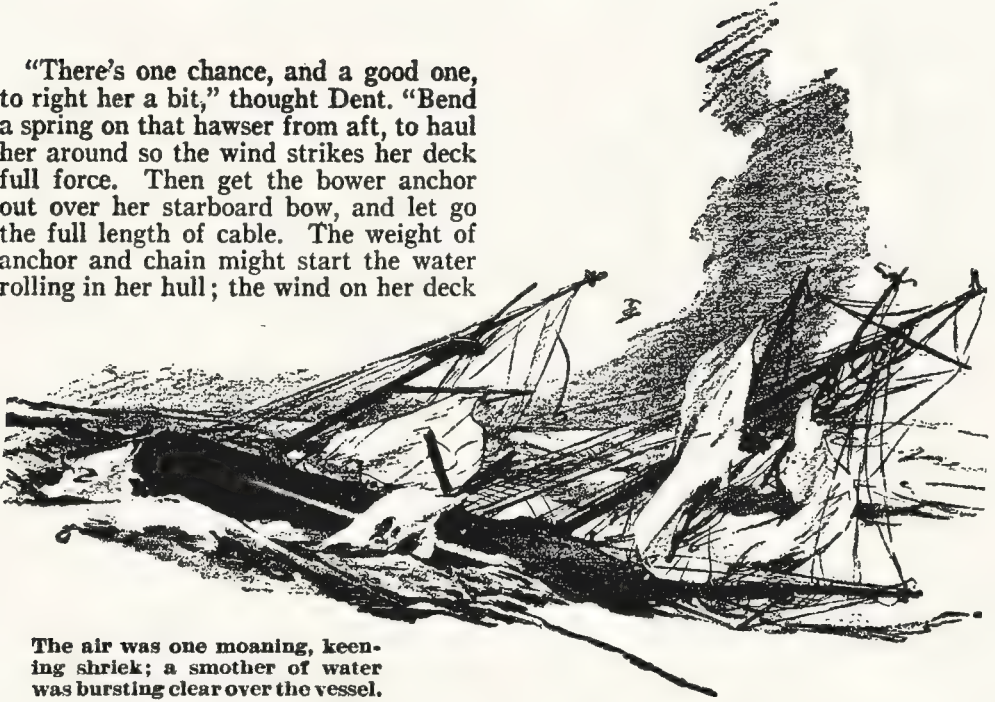
He made his way forward, got an ax, and went to work.

The first thing was to clear the spars that threatened to stave in the bows; to clear them, and make use of them. Once they were made fast on a long hawser, he attacked the cordage and cut away; in twenty minutes he had the satisfaction of seeing the tangle drift off to windward.

Almost at once, stayed by this sea-anchor, the barque rode more easily. The clogging weight of spars and canvas held her head into the wind and steadied her. She was still, however, nearly on her beam ends.



"There's one chance, and a good one, to right her a bit," thought Dent. "Bend a spring on that hawser from aft, to haul her around so the wind strikes her deck full force. Then get the bower anchor out over her starboard bow, and let go the full length of cable. The weight of anchor and chain might start the water rolling in her hull; the wind on her deck



The air was one moaning, keening shriek; a smother of water was bursting clear over the vessel.

will help—and once started, she may come up."

He smiled, in ghastly ridicule of his own words. One man, alone, might as well think of hauling down the moon.

When he went aft and looked over the shattered stern, he gave up completely. Those spars had driven the stern cabins and the overhang into splintered ruin, almost down to the rudder-post. Only the drift of the spars forward, when the foretop-hamper came down, had brought her around and kept her from filling with the seas. Let her come stern to wind and sea, or even let her be righted on a more even keel, and she would fill and go down like a shot.

"A sweet mess!" pondered Dent. "Leave her as she is, and she'll sink under my feet. Get her righted, and she'll fill faster than she's filling now. Well, before anything else, I'll have to patch up the stern somehow."

He started forward to break out tools. The sun was just above the horizon.

IT was here that he suddenly saw a man, standing by the forecandle hood. It was the second mate, naked to the waist, gaping blankly around.

"Gorman!" exclaimed Dent in amazement. "You, of all men! What happened last night?"

Gorman came to him with a quick, hearty handgrip of joy; for the moment, they were men united against peril, and nothing else mattered.

"Squall took us aback and the cargo shifted. Lord, Dent! Thought you went with the Cap'n when that falling top-hamper knocked him overboard!"

"Gone, is he? Poor Whidden! I was pitched out of my berth and knocked silly. Just came around, at daylight. How do you come here?"

"My boat was the last—stove in. The others had got off all safe, except for some of the hands carried away. I hauled somebody aboard; dunno who. Down there now. I was mauled about and must ha' gone to sleep; don't remember." Gorman stretched himself, winced and stretched again, badly bruised. "That's queer. Us being here alive, and the ship sinking under us!"

"Not yet!" Dent laughed with ringing jubilation and excitement. He was now not alone. . . . Anything was possible, everything! "She's far from—Hello! Well, I'll be damned!"

From the forecandle, whose hood now stood open, a bedraggled figure was emerging. Dent recognized Thady, scantily clad, limping, one side of his face dark with matted blood from a scalp-wound. Gorman turned, saw him, and surveyed him with unconcealed disgust.

"So that's what I pulled aboard! Too bad it wasn't someone worth while. Well, we're two men and a half, anyhow. I'll break out some stores, and over a bite we can lay our course."

Half an hour later, a makeshift but highly satisfying meal finished, Dent lit

his pipe and beamed at his two companions. Not alone! This made all the difference. Also, he was at ease otherwise. Gorman knew that Nahiena had got away in the boat of Sir Francis, which was cheering intelligence.

"That limey took hold like a good 'un," observed Gorman. "He'll come out topside, never fear! The boats were

"You haven't looked at it yet; how do you know? Brisk about it, now!"

The heavy, sultry gaze of Gorman held for a moment on the steady eyes of Dent; then Gorman flushed and licked his lips.

"Aye, sir," he said, and started off.

Dent headed aft, conscious of trouble brewing, and vowed to himself that he would give Gorman so much to do that



all well found, and the islands can be reached."

"Aye, they can," said Dent. "Feeling better, Thady? Take it easy, man; I'll appoint you cook. Get the galley in shape, what's left of it."

"Galley?" The brows of Gorman came down in a heavy stare. "Why the galley? Our one chance is to get in the sea-anchor and use the spars to make a raft, before the barque takes us down."

"The barque's going to swim," said Dent.

Gorman stared, argued, cursed. It was rankly impossible to do anything with the shivered hulk. Her stern was stove in; she was sinking momentarily, he said.

"I doubt that," said Dent, puffing at his pipe.

Gorman fumed anew, angered by this placid restraint.

Dent shook his head. "No. We might be on a raft until Doomsday. If we can right the barque, keep her afloat, and clap a bit of canvas on her, we can reach the islands."

"But that's out of the question, man!" stormed Gorman. "She's lower in the water every minute!"

Dent rose. "Time she was getting higher, then. You and I can do it."

"Stubborn Marbleheader! I tell you—"

"Don't tell me; I'm telling you," Dent suddenly cut in. "Thady, get about your job with the galley. Mr. Gorman, break out one of the spare royals and fetch it aft, while I get the tools; break out some pitch while you're about it, for Thady to melt."

"You can't patch that hole in the stern!" Gorman protested.

the man would have scant energy left for animosity.

Thus began a labor from which, had he been able to foresee its whole scope, Abner Dent himself would have recoiled aghast. He saw, however, only the immediate job to hand. He knew how desperate it was, but had no choice.

Those gaping holes astern were too wide and deep to be closed by a canvas slung over them. In order to get at the overhang, a sling had to be rigged for each man; once down, they had to clear away the gaps and stopper them with stays for the canvas. Working there, now above water, now half submerged, was no child's play. Beyond all this was the unpleasant, nerve-racking knowledge that at any moment the wind might rise and bring up a sea to fill the hulk, or she might sink under them. There was much to be said for Gorman's argument!

THE hours passed and sunset was at hand, the western sky in a crimson glow that presaged well for the morrow. The two men knocked off at Thady's call, wearily dragged themselves forward, and found that he had got together a meal of sorts, with hot coffee.

"I could do a lot better," he declared, "if the galley stove wasn't lying on one side. Is there any chance of getting the ship to stand upright?"

Dent laughed heartily; even Gorman smiled at this lubberly language.

"Give us another day's work, skipper," said Dent cheerfully, "and we may manage it."

"You think so?" snapped Gorman. "What've we done all day? Nothing except get ready to sling the canvas. To get that done and tarred, will take us all tomorrow."

"Not much," Dent replied. "What do you figure we'll do tonight? Sleep while



the ship fills? A lantern slung from the stern and stayed outboard will let us work."

"Work at night?" Gorman stared.

"Aye, and every night! And once we get her righted a bit, my lad, there'll be the pumps to keep going. That is, if you can keep up with a one-handed man."

This stung. Gorman flushed and said no more. As they got on with the meal, discussing the grim details of the past night, he relaxed and became more cheerful; that taunt had done its work.

"THERE'S a ghost aboard," Thady said abruptly, as he dished out the coffee and blew on his own pannikin. "Twice today I saw something moving, and when I looked again, it wasn't there."

Dent grinned. "Damned if you don't look like a sultan or an Injun chief, with that thing around your head! And now you're trying to play jokes on us, eh?"

Thady stared at them, sultry-eyed and serious. He had washed the blood from his head and had bound up the wound with a red handkerchief, which gave him a highly piratical air.

"No," he said. "What's more, when I went to break out these cabin stores I had set a lot of this ship biscuit to soak; when I came back, a good half of it was gone. Either you took it or the ghost did!"

"So you really believe there's a ghost?" Dent exploded in laughter at the solemn air of Thady. Gorman, sourly grinning, went below to retrieve some of his own effects before returning to work, and Dent got a lantern ready against darkness.

"You can laugh at me, Mr. Dent," said Thady, coming close and lowering his voice, "but I'm in earnest about it."

"That's why I'm laughing," retorted Dent. Then he sobered, and gripped Thady's arm. "Look, man; clear this nonsense out of your mind. You'll hear ghosts below-decks with every creak of the timbers, with every slosh of the water that's in her now!"

"All right. Heaven forbid that I should affront your soul with apparitions and the powers of evil!" said Thady, with a touch of his forensic actor's rant. "But you'll credit me with reason in its place, no doubt; and when I tell you that I've got the whole truth for you about Cap'n Clum and this man Sir Francis—"

"Stop." Dent checked him, on seeing Gorman heading forward to join them. "Thady, let that rest for the moment," he said wearily. "What matters now, is

making this vessel swim; I've no mind or heart for anything else. It's all gone over the horizon, so let it rest there till we've time and energy to discuss it. And get yourself in shape; the work hasn't begun yet. Once we have her righted, you're going to learn what hard labor means. Now get that tar-bucket heated, for in another hour or two we'll be needing it."

He called Gorman, and they returned to the work.

By dark, the canvas was cut to fit the worst of the gaps, and nailed into place with board battens to hold it firmly. The lantern was rigged. Stiff and sore, they went down again with swabs, and Thady lowered the steaming tar-bucket; Dent was resolved to make this job good enough to withstand any ordinary battering of seas.

"They say a man doesn't get his hands out of the tar-bucket by becoming a second mate," observed Dent as they swabbed away. "Same holds true of chief mate and master, at the present moment! How goes it, Mister? Feeling tuckered?"

"I'll outlast you," said Saul Gorman. To himself, Dent chuckled, caring little that the man's weary voice was surly.

It was done at last, seams and canvas tarred and water-tight, and what was under the water level and impossible to tar, well battened. They climbed to the deck, took in the lantern and extinguished it, and then dropped anywhere. Dent was too sore and weary even to drag up a donkey-breakfast mattress from below; he stretched out in the scuppers and was asleep before he knew it.

## Chapter Eight

SUNRISE, and work again, after a good swim that loosened up all the aching muscles and stiffened body. Gorman, with a wry jest about sharks and barracuda, refused the same treatment; as a matter of fact, he could not swim.

Today Dent took up the great problem, that of getting the barque on a more or less even keel. As he pointed out to Gorman, she was not much lower in the water, if any, than on the preceding day. Therefore, if she could be sufficiently righted to carry a bit of canvas, they had everything to hope for and nothing to lose.

It was a simple matter to bend a line on the hawser that held the sea-anchor,

and belay it aft, to serve as a spring when the moment came. The sea was freshening and the breeze was stiffening out of the east; so much the quicker to win or lose all at one cast, said Gorman.

To get that anchor unlashed and over the upper rail and out the starboard side—there was the rub. Thirty hundred-weight of iron, and three men to handle it! That meant shears must be rigged. Shears meant spars. Spars meant the sea-anchor must be hauled in, robbed of timber, then lashed together and set adrift once more. Two men to do it, for at this work Thady did not count.

IT was mid-afternoon when Dent passed the shear-lashing and made fast the blocks of a threefold tackle. Gorman eyed this critically.

"Three of us can't do it even with that fish-tackle. We'll have to use a whole series of falls."

"Right," said Dent. "Hook this to the balance-hook of the anchor. To this hook a couple of twofold purchases, or more. Then we can haul on one fish-fall and slack away on the other."

"Shiver me trousers if it aint possible!" exclaimed Gorman with a trace of excitement. "We can get her over to the cathead and make fast, while we bend on the cable. But if we let her go from there, that bower will bump hell out of the sta'board bow and carry away the forestem sure!"

"Correct." Dent laughed. "With the barque at this angle, we practically have to get the bower suspended from the keelson before we can let go. The tackle will help run her down, of course. Well, if the trick works, we'll celebrate by knocking off until daylight, and then begin the real job."

"If it works," said Saul Gorman, unsmiling, "I'll take off my hat to you! Time to smoke a pipe?"

"Aye. The wind's not dying down with sunset, and I'm betting on the wind to help us. The first roll is the one that'll count most! If the water moves inside her, it'll take some of the cargo back with it."

They ate, smoked, relaxed, listening to the sigh and surge of water in the hold. Thady spoke out suddenly.

"It happened again, this afternoon."

"Eh? What did?" asked Dent, while Gorman rolled inquiring eyes.

"The thing." Thady stared at them gravely. "I got a pannikin of water from that butt in the main cabin, aft. I set it

down while I stepped into the mess cabin for those plates we're using now. When I came back, the pannikin was gone. It still is gone."

Dent eyed him sharply, pricked by his strange earnestness. Then he cast the matter aside and rose.

"Well, let's get at it! Gorman, get out that hawse-block or jackass, and have the cable ready to bend on. We'll get the capstan-bars ready for you."

They were at it, finally; at the last job, at the crisis. The pawls clicked. The tackle drew taut, lifted; the three men gasped at the bars, grunting in unison. Little by little the heavy bower rose and was hitched over the rail, over to the cathead. The cable was bent on. The bower was eased along the incline of the bows. The cable clinked in the hawse-hole.

"Way enough—ready to let go!" panted Dent. "Your job, Gorman! Thady and I will haul in on the spring. . . . You let go and then lend us a hand."

The anchor was dropped, all the tremendous weight of cable and bower rattling down to bring that upper starboard bow around. And aft, the spring line came in, slowly at first but faster with Gorman's aid. As it came, the bow swung around, bringing the whole deck to windward.

The weight from below, the wind-weight above, seemed futile. Dent's heart fell; as nothing happened, as the conviction of failure grew more awful, the blood drained out of his face.

"Look! By the Eternal, look!"

The cry burst from Gorman; he pointed at the water alongside. Sure enough, slowly but certainly, the port rail was lifting. They heard the sounds coming from below, now; the souging and swishing as the slow-moving mass of water shifted. Dent shouted joyously; a wild burst of exultation seized him. The barque moved, swung upward. She came erect; she swung far over to starboard, and then surged back to port again. And here she rested; still with a bad list, true, but upright.

EVEN Gorman joined in the jubilant handshaking and back-thumping that celebrated the victory.

"My hat's off to you, like I said!" he bellowed, grinning widely. "And damned glad of it. I never looked for her to come up! Now we can try the well."

He rushed off. Dent, flushed and excited, met the delighted eyes of Thady.



Gorman came upon a gasping struggling figure, and grabbed it.



"I think we all deserve a good nip of the skipper's whisky—eh?"

"Not me." Thady shook his head. "I've been too near dead, Mr. Dent; I swore I'd never touch it again if I kept alive. I'll get the galley to rights and warm up the coffee."

Gorman came back with a long face. "Four foot eight inches in the well!" he reported. "Even if we get canvas up, a shift o' wind would throw her over again, with that much water in her!"

"It won't be in her," said Dent happily. "Come on below and we'll break into the Cap'n's locker. Then, with morning, we'll really go to work."

They tramped down the companion ladder and went into Whidden's cabin.

To have the barque right side up once more was like being in a new and joyous world. They found the locker's contents to be rum instead of whisky; they sampled it, grinned at each other—and sobered. Both had heard the same thing.

Out in the passage, the door of another cabin had clicked softly shut.

Dent turned, Gorman followed him. The doors of the shattered stern-cabins stood wide. Others were closed. One by one, Dent threw them open; only emptiness and mad confusion. He came to the last, and shoved it ajar. Nothing here, either.

Suddenly Gorman sniffed.

"Man or animal," said he, and darted at the berths. A triumphant oath escaped

him, answered by a thin, wailing cry. He came erect, dragging from one of the bunks a crumpled, scrawny figure. "Here's the ghost, right enough! That there island woman; she was with them missionaries."

It was the old hag, Keave.

Dent stood staring at her, in a wave of recognition. Gorman addressed her, but she made no reply. Dent remembered what Sir Francis had said . . . that she spoke no English. This was nonsense, or else a flat lie, since she had been in New England for a year past.

"Speak up, Keave," he said, coming close to her. "We know you talk English; we know all about you. You've seen us both, often enough; you know we won't harm you. I suppose you got left behind and were scared stiff, eh?"

She nodded, her black eyes fastened upon him; eyes still lustrous, despite age.

"All right; we'll get you and the ship safe home, old woman. Keep this cabin for your own. No more stealing grub. Get out in the morning and lend a hand with the cooking. You're one of us now. Understood?"

She nodded again, but said no word. They walked out.

"This calls for another drink," said Dent. "She seems sane enough."

"You ought to know," said Gorman.

In the gathering darkness, their eyes met for an instant. Dent smiled.

"One of these days," he said amiably, "I'm going to ask you a few things, Saul Gorman. About the yarns you told Kennedy and others, back in Frisco. But this isn't the time."

He turned, went to his own cabin and flung himself down in utter exhaustion. He had done the work of ten men this day; and so had Saul Gorman. . . . All he wanted now was to sleep.

ONE thing still plagued him, at the back of his mind; it wakened him about midnight. He found a lantern, lit it, went on deck; when he had sounded the bell, he put out the lantern, drew a deep breath, and looked up at the stars.

"Four foot eight inches. . . . She hasn't made a drop more. She's not making water. We can manage after all—with help. God, You're going to be proud of the way the men You made can help themselves; and You can do Your part by keeping the weather down a few days more. That's the best prayer I can make!"

A glitter streaked across the sky, a falling star. Dent quivered. An answer

to his words? He knew better; yet, as he went back to his berth, he fell asleep with new assurance and comfort. Four foot eight inches still—hurray!

To Thady's amazement, the morning brought Keave to lend a hand. She almost never spoke; the old crone might have been dumb. Yet she cooked efficiently, despite her inhuman silence. And this released Thady for a background of such labor as he had never known.

ALTHOUGH the rudder was intact, the wheel had been carried away and the arms that manipulated the rudder through a cog-system were disabled. New steering-arms had to be installed. This was a sample of everything, for the vessel had been swept clean, and thanks to Gorman's ax practically all the rigging had carried away; before a scrap of canvas could be shown, there were a thousand and one things to be done. And beyond all this, in a steady monotony that soon became terrible, were the pumps.

Dent hitched lines to the pump-brakes, to ease the back-sapping labor involved; none the less, the punishment was terrific. Every hour spent off any other job had to be devoted to the pumps, and there were only three of them to do it, since Keave could not help here.

Into the night Dent forced the work, giving only four unbroken hours for sleep. After three days of this, results began to show. Inch by inch, the water lowered until it was at two feet on the third evening. Enough running rigging was rove so that, an hour before sunset, the sea-anchor could be taken in and broken up and brought aboard. The spanker was hoisted aft, and a jib forward. She filled and bore away, slapping into the seas; but the three shadows of men, still keeping the pumps going, were too spent to celebrate.

Gorman had worked with a will, too much a seaman not to recognize Dent's success and thrill to it; yet, under the continual slavery involved, friction gradually came to a head between the two. Now, with Thady at the makeshift helm, they stared at the sea, at the rig aloft, at the slow but certain wake. The pumps had been temporarily abandoned, in order to finish this greater accomplishment.

"She's got steerage-way anyhow," said Dent wearily. "Wind's holding steady from the sou'east; that's good, counteracts the list."

"Ought to have a topsail on the fore, or a reefed course," said Gorman. "It'd lift



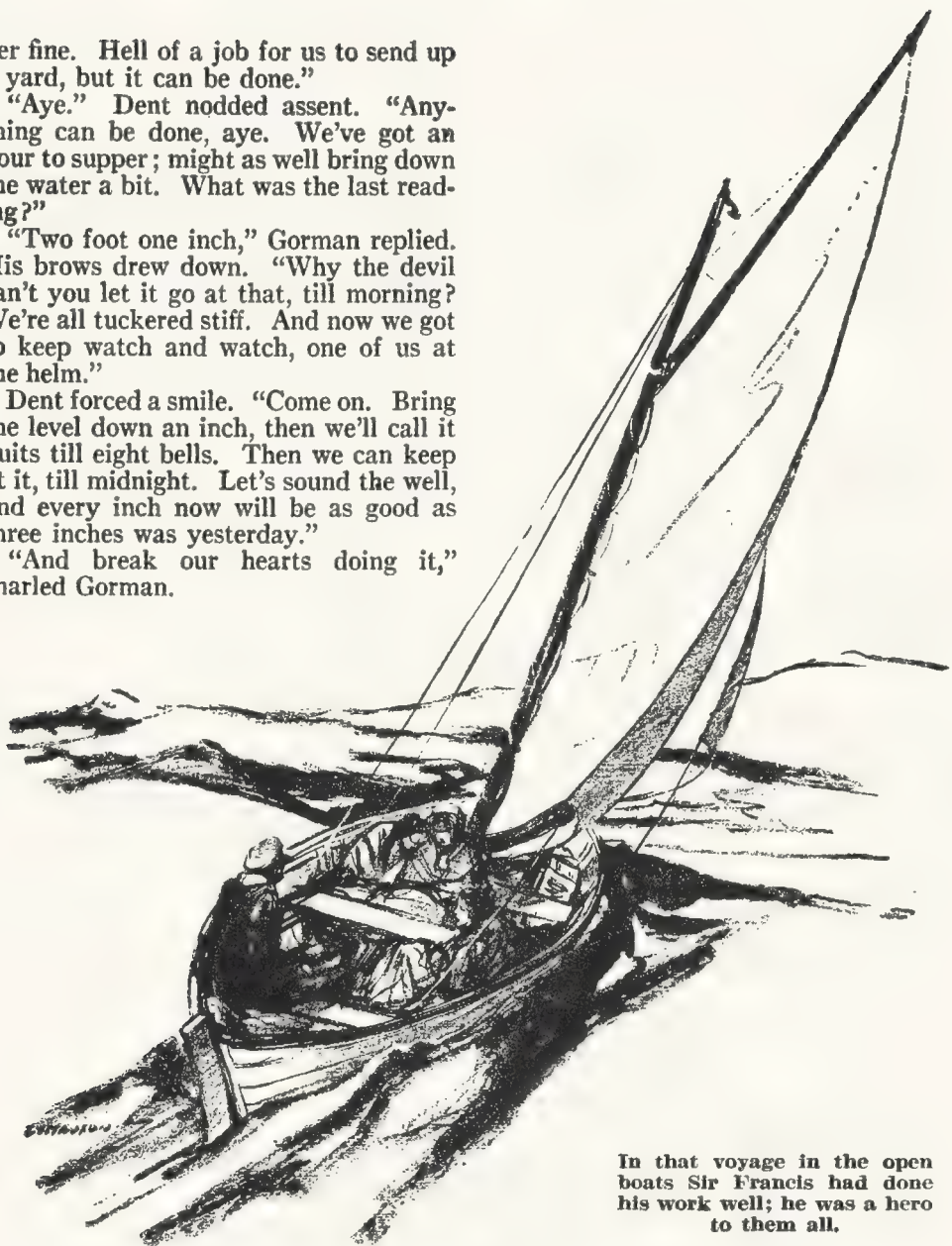
her fine. Hell of a job for us to send up a yard, but it can be done."

"Aye." Dent nodded assent. "Anything can be done, aye. We've got an hour to supper; might as well bring down the water a bit. What was the last reading?"

"Two foot one inch," Gorman replied. His brows drew down. "Why the devil can't you let it go at that, till morning? We're all tuckered stiff. And now we got to keep watch and watch, one of us at the helm."

Dent forced a smile. "Come on. Bring the level down an inch, then we'll call it quits till eight bells. Then we can keep at it, till midnight. Let's sound the well, and every inch now will be as good as three inches was yesterday."

"And break our hearts doing it," snarled Gorman.



In that voyage in the open boats Sir Francis had done his work well; he was a hero to them all.

None the less, he trailed along to the well. Dent made the sounding. His heart fell. The thing which he had been fearing had come true!

An incredulous, gasping oath escaped Gorman.

"Two foot seven—why, she's gaining on us!"

Dent gave dull assent. "Remember how those spars were pounding her forefoot? They've loosened things up; probably pounded a leak that developed as soon as she began to slap into the seas."

Gorman swore luridly. Dent, with an effort, braced his shoulders.

"Well, it's no great trick. We'd better get below now, and locate the bow-timbers that are started. Then we can sling a tarpaulin under the forefoot. That'll hold her until we get the water out. When she's riding high, we can make fast the tarp—it'll serve until we're able to make better repairs."

Gorman turned upon him savagely.

"Why—that means we've got to begin all over, blast it!"

Dent nodded.

"Sure. And we must get at it, too. Every minute we waste, that leak's gaining on us."

"It's more'n a human can stand; to hell with it!" stormed Gorman, in frantic despair and fury. "I'll have naught to do wi' the job. I'm done!"

"Steady, now," Dent cautioned him. "It's no harder for you than for us."

Gorman turned upon him savagely. "Easy enough said! Yes, you'd break the chains of hell to get there, you would! And for why? Because you've picked up a girl from nowhere and now you're fair crazy about her—you and your kinky-haired princess!"

Dent felt his self-control shatter.

"You've crossed the line now, Saul Gorman," he said, low-voiced. "Let's have it out. Why have you uttered these lies about me?"

"No lies at all. It's no great secret," retorted the other. "I had it all direct from Fairhaven. Starting a revolution, are you? Aiming to clear out the missionaries and then turn the islands over to the French, huh? Aiming to make your brown lass into a queen, are you? She's all that matters to you, but she aint a stowed jib in a hurricane to the rest of us! All that these island lassies are good for is takin' up with sailormen. Why, I never saw a one of 'em as wouldn't jump at the chance to go walkin' in the brush with a fancy fo'c's'le hand."

**T**HEN Dent hit him, with the image of Nahiena in mind. Dog-weary men, blurred to all reason, let go easily.

Next instant they were at it, hammer and tongs, all over the deck, while Thady yelled vainly at them and old Keave stood watching. Both men were stripped to the waist, and the fight was fo'c's'le style with nothing barred; but, after that savage first moment, it was not much of a battle. Their vital energy was too low; it flashed up, burned out and was gone.

The anger surging in Dent's heart, however, was far greater than the brute passion of the second mate. When at last he got his hook fast in Gorman's belt and began to shake the man back and forth, he could pound Gorman almost at will. Suddenly the belt broke. Gorman tore free and knocked Dent sprawling into the scuppers. He followed, and clinched.

Dent fought clear and hammered him again. Staggering, reeling, they battled across the deck, neither one of them able to get in a forceful blow. Without warning, Gorman's arms dropped, a gasping groan burst from him; then he collapsed and tumbled forward on hands and knees, his head hanging

Dent clawed his way to the rail, where a bucket and lanyard sat. Panting, he hauled in water and doused it over himself. Then he emptied a bucket over Gorman, caught hold of the man, and hauled him to his feet.

"Tar's hot. Get that spare royal and swab it down, then have the tackle ready for slinging it from the rail. Have it done before I get back. Jump, damn you!"

Bleeding, bruised, Gorman yielded.

Before dark, they got the canvas slung in place over her forefoot and the leak was stopped, or the worst of it. While Gorman went aft to the makeshift helm, Thady joined Dent and they ate together.

"You're badly battered," observed Thady, his eyes bright and alert. "It was good while it lasted. I was scared for you. Now he'll hate you."

"No; we'll be friends now," said Dent, with a faint grin. "Maybe you'll hate me when I tell you how you came aboard here. I had you shanghaied," he went on, while Thady stared at him. "I shipped you, so that you'd be off liquor for a while, and would reach the islands in fit shape to take over the money Nahiena was waiting to pay you."

"Oh!" said Thady, slowly. "So that's it! Hate you? Not much. Do you know who got me drunk in Frisco? It was Sir Francis. He was giving me all kinds of a story, and making me talk. No, I don't hate you. I'm proud that you thought enough of me to do that."

"All right. So the limey was pumping you, eh? He filled up Gorman with a lot of nonsense and had him repeating it all over town. About me starting some sort of revolution in the islands."

"That's it! That's what I wanted to tell you!" Thady exclaimed eagerly. "Miss Clum was talking about it to me that last night, before the storm hit us. She meant to ask you next morning. Sir Francis told her you were helping in the scheme—to make her queen or something of the sort. He said Cap'n Clum was in it too, and would be a big man in the islands when it was all done."

"Never mind, never mind; it makes my head hurt. Forget it!"

**B**UT though Dent refused to discuss it, he could not forget it.

Lies, lies! Where did they end, where did truth begin? Sir Francis was spreading a network of lies to serve his own purposes. He was making sure that Abner Dent of Marblehead would get popular



credit—or blame—for the revolution, if it occurred. Yet he wanted Dent's help, and needed it. Then why—

However, it was not worth any worry now. Whether the scattered boats would be picked up at all, was a question. More likely, they would be picked up by a whaler or a South American trader and carried to the ends of the earth. Or Sir Francis might lead them all to the islands. Anything was possible.

"Sir Francis lied to you," Dent said to Gorman, talking it out. "Why? I don't know, so far. He's got something afoot, but I've no part in it."

"I have," Gorman said bluntly. "French gold is as good as any other."

"France wants to grab the islands, eh?"

"That's it."

"Why did Sir Francis have you spread reports about me?"

"So people would watch you, not us."

"Why did he put a gang on me, the last day there?"

"He wanted you knocked around and shipped aboard so drunk and bloody that you'd be a proper sight," said Gorman, denying nothing. "Partly on the young lady's account, maybe."

"Oh!" Dent smiled slightly. "So it wasn't to kill me or leave me behind, eh? Very well. I don't think his schemes will come to anything now; if they do, I'll not be sharing them. Suppose we forget the whole business and shake hands on it?"

"Suits me." Gorman, with a twisted grin, stuck out his hand. "You're a damned good sailor, sir. Now we've got the bad blood out of us, what about a drink and laying a proper course?"

THEY had the drink, set the weary watches, and there was no further objection to resuming the heart-breaking work. Laying a course was a different matter. Not an instrument was to be found; Sir Francis had taken them all with him. Nothing so clearly evidenced the hard driving resolution of the man as his care for such a detail, supreme in a seaman's mind, at that moment of midnight death and destruction.

"He's good," Dent acknowledged. "So he'll be taking the boats to the islands, eh? Well, I'll get there by dead reckoning, spite of hell or high water!"

With morning, he was again driving himself and the others as well. Keave attended to her own work like a deaf-mute; she was a neat creature and cooked well, giving no hint of any occult nonsense.

They lost track of the days. The three men roamed the barque like scarecrow shadows, unshaven and haggard, salt-encrusted, fumbling now at the pumps and now at other work. Gradually they sent the water down and down. Thady, to Dent's surprise, though working like a dog day and night together, seemed to thrive on it; he was a new man.

There came a three-day glassy calm in which the *Eliza* rolled desperately to the ground-swell and opened up some new leak that was beyond reach. Grimly they attacked the pumps once more but could barely keep up with the leak.

It was on the third afternoon that Dent realized the worst. The other two had dropped at the pumps, lying sprawled asleep on a brief respite. Dent tried the well; when he found that the water had gained, instead of lowered, a groan escaped him. He gave up in despair; now things had gone past human endurance!

His impulse was to fling himself down beside the others, end the useless drudgery, and let the barque wallow its doomed way to the bottom. The seas were slowly heaving to the ground-swell.

Instead, Dent went down to the after cabins and poured himself a drink, one large enough to shock him momentarily out of his weariness and despondency. Upon some vague prompting, he stepped into the cabin Sir Francis had occupied, and took a look around the utter confusion of the place.

He found something there. A sheet of paper lying in one corner, a message half-written and ending in an ink-blot. Sir Francis must have been in the act of writing when that squall threw the barque on her beam ends. Dent read the scrap of writing, which obviously carried on some letter that was not in sight here:

*—sure of Tauai and Maui. The principal chiefs of Hawaii are answered for; this woman aboard us, Keave, will prove invaluable. As Kamehameha has an armed vessel, it is essential that we have a better one, and this matter has now been arranged satisfactorily.*

*My stay at San Francisco and vicinity has proven extremely fortunate. Men, ship and supplies have gone ahead to the islands. Further, a high trump is now in my hands which I will personally explain to you. Success is no longer doubtful. With the promised support at the proper moment and the French force to give—*

Abner Dent blinked at the words. No lies here, apparently; all rang true.

Now he began to understand Keave's mummery with the royal yellow feather robe. So the old hag, whose great influence had been well attested by the missionaries, was hand in glove with Sir Francis—and Nahiena was to become a queen, or rather a French puppet. After what he had heard in San Francisco, Dent could not doubt that certain whites of the islands were also behind the plot.

"So she's an island girl, a king's daughter? Be damned if she is!" muttered Dent. "I was a triple fool not to discuss it with her. For some reason they wanted Cap'n Clum in their hands; and they've got him. Why? Lord knows. But I'll find out. Sir Francis wants her too, and he's got her."

He ascended to the deck again, thoughtfully. Keave was aboard here; he could make that old hag prove of inestimable service. Through her, he could learn what Sir Francis intended. Make Keave think he had joined in the plot, and she'd talk.

He looked at the two sprawled, exhausted figures. He looked at the pumps and winced; the labor was all useless, for the water would gain and gain. . . . Could they sight the high peaks of Hawaii before the end came? A thin smile twisted his lips. Give up—now?

"Be damned if I will!" he muttered. He looked up to see cat's-paws creeping across the glassy sea, and far off a darker line of approaching wind. He strode at the two figures and kicked them awake.

"All hands, all hands! Lay aloft, all hands, and trim ship!"

They sat up, blinking and groaning. Dent laughed harshly.

"Up with you, lads! I've news to break your hearts; the water's gaining on us. But here's the wind and we're off, so jump to it—sight the island peaks before she goes down under us!"

The leaks gaining? They groaned again, and struggled up. The canvas flapped and filled. Once more the clink-clink of the pumps echoed along the deck. To their monotony clicked the words in Dent's brain:

"Make her talk. . . . Make her talk."

And eventually he did it. But the barque, by that time, was done for.

come with the first missionaries, and he had been at Kairua since the early '20s, at which time the royal family lived here. Sitting with Nahiena on the veranda of what had once been the king's palace, he gazed out at the bay and smiled.

"They told us we could do little here, because of the hard lava and lack of soil," he observed. "However, we found plenty to do; there are eighty thousand souls on this island of Hawaii alone. Let the prosperity and so-called success and power go to the other islands and the larger missionary stations; we're content here and have our work."

"And you knew my father?"

"Quite well; and your mother."

He paused there; he was a man of long, reflective pauses. Nahiena repressed her eagerness, with a sigh.

A HUSH was upon the station, with its New Englandish church, and upon the village along the shore; this was the Sabbath, and in the Sandwich Islands the Sabbath was a sacred institution—or rather, in that portion of the islands under missionary influence. True, the earlier blue laws had been done away with and it was no longer illegal to take a horseback ride on the Sabbath, but no such amusement was permitted at mission quarters.

Here in Hawaii, still the most savage of the islands, the four scattered stations had done well, but the native chiefs were turbulent and close to their ancient ways. Many had visited in New England or served aboard English and American ships, and much English was spoken; yet they were not pleased with destiny. Ships seldom touched here, preferring the safer ports of the leeward islands; this largely sterile and mountainous lava rock offered the white men few inducements to settle here. From it the great Kamehameha had led his warriors to conquest of the other and more fertile islands, but the great ones were no more in Hawaii, and power and prosperity were departed.

Nahiena, here exclusively Mary Clum, sat demurely, eyed Asa Bishop's profile, and prayed for patience.

"A remarkable man, that Sir Francis Fairhaven," meditated Asa Bishop. Nahiena had at last got him to the point of talking, but he was slow in reaching the subject. "If he were a New Englander, I'd say he was mighty slick; don't know as I'd trust him too far. But being a Britisher makes all the difference. One can't go on surface indications. Remark-

## Chapter Nine

OLD Asa Bishop was a gentle, strict, uncompromising man, stiff as a ramrod despite his years; he and his wife had





"Where is he?" cried Nahiena. "There," said the crone. "Not far. In the house of Keave."

able bit of work, bringing those boats straight here!"

Nahiena held her peace.

Remarkable piece of work, undoubtedly; yet she shivered at the memory of that voyage in the open boats. Neither she nor the other two women had suffered physically. Indeed, to the others it had been far worse than to her, because their prim New England conventions were frightfully shocked by the reversal to primitive conditions.

Sir Francis had done his work well, at times brutally well; he was a hero to them all when he rode the boats safe into Kairua bay. He had a gay story for every despondency, a firm word and a hard eye for every crisis; for the two missionaries and the women he had a polite restraint and sympathy. It was not at thought of him that Nahiena shiv-

ered, but because of the sudden gap that even his warm friendship could not quite fill . . . for Abner Dent was dead and drowned behind them in the sea.

The whole party had gone on to Oahu and Honolulu. Only Nahiena had remained here, on the warm invitation of the Bishops. Also on the advice of Sir Francis, privately given, as they strolled along the beach together.

"Stay here by all means," he said. "Your father may be in no danger whatever; or if he is, I can help him out of it. I'll bring him here to you. Remember, it's twenty years or nearly that, since he carried you away; no doubt time has wiped away the whole memory and he's not in any peril."

"But the details!" she persisted. "Even if he did carry me off, why was he sentenced to die if ever he returned?"

"I don't know," said Sir Francis, and quite honestly. "As I had the story, and as Keave confirmed it, you were the king's daughter; reason enough for the death-penalty, I'd say! I know no details. But it's essential that you should remain here in Hawaii and not go to Honolulu, for the island chiefs must find you here; you must make your appearance here first of all. Now that Keave's dead, I'll have to arrange about that as soon as I get back here with your father and our friends."

His great dream, the great future promised her, meant very little at the moment; Captain Clum could confirm this story about her birth, or deny it.

SO could Asa Bishop, as she unexpectedly learned one day, and she had prodded until he consented to tell her why it meant death for Ezra Clum to return to the islands. But he seemed very slow in getting to his subject.

"It's providential that Sir Francis was there to bring you to safety," he said. "As clear a case of direct protection by Providence as I have ever encountered! A heartening sign, too; things have not gone too well with the islands lately, and with our work here. The influx of worldly minded men, the vexations of commerce and of nations, have all had evil effects. The king shows the signs of dissipation. Well, well, I was thinking of your father."

And high time he was, thought Nahiena. He looked up and spoke abruptly.

"The story was not true at all," he said, and was silent again.

"What story, please?" she urged.

"Why, the story about what he did, when he left!" Bishop spoke with a burst of words, as though his mind were now made up. Nahiena, staring at him wide-eyed, listened with bated breath.

"It was this: That he carried away a female child, the king's daughter, and killed a chief's son in getting away, and stole the magnificent robes and personal effects that had been buried with the bones of Kamehameha the Great. No, it was a lie, all of it! Someone else did these things and the blame was put upon him because he left suddenly.

"You see, it was the heathen custom to kill or drown female infants," he went on. "Sometimes they were sacrificed to the idols. So, I imagine, it was done in this case, and to avoid reproaches or trouble the lie was spread that Ezra Clum and his bride had stolen the child and

done the other things. They were sentenced to death if ever they returned. I think it is long ago forgotten; he could not stand in any danger today."

"You said that he—that they—left suddenly?"

"Yes. They fled together." Asa Bishop turned and regarded her, his stern eyes warming. "Child, you are very beautiful; you are like your mother. I fear much lest you be also headstrong and not sufficiently grounded in the precepts of the Word. However, that was long ago and the world is no longer the same."

Once again he paused, nodded, went on:

"Ezra Clum was a seaman. She was the daughter of an old friend of mine, a missionary, and was forbidden to exchange speech with ungodly men. Therefore she ran away with one of them! God forbid that I attribute blame to any person, but I believe the matter was ill handled. Her parents are no longer living. The affair lies in the past and is best forgotten. Have no fear for your father. Who cares today whether a child were lost, the robes of Kamehameha stolen, or a young man killed? No one. There is all I know."

"Thank you," she said. "Thank you!"

BISHOP glanced at his watch and started upright in his chair.

"Hello! Time never stops, does it? I must go to prepare my notes against the sermon at the afternoon meeting. I hope to see you there. Be happy, Miss Clum, and forgive me if my words have brought you any disquiet."

"Indeed they have not! They have cleared away many clouds," she said happily. "I think I'll take a walk along the shore. I suppose there's no objection?"

"Of course not," he rejoined. "I myself sometimes find that the grandeur of the sea is an aid in the contemplation of eternity and the divine verities; naturally, I could not encourage anything in the nature of amusement on the Sabbath, but since your purpose is purely meditation upon the things of God, there is no harm. And," he added, "it is perfectly safe, but don't go too far. Keep close to the village."

Smiling, she departed, stepping sedately along until she was out of sight of the house, and then, making for the shore and away from the village.

She was suddenly freed of a burden; so, then, Sir Francis had been wrong! According to him, that old woman Keave



had told him the tale about her birth . . . hideous, that old crone! Sir Francis had no reason to doubt, of course. He actually believed that the so-called daughter of Captain Ezra Clum was really a princess of Kamehameha's blood; the story existed.

But the story was a lie. Asa Bishop had just said so!

"Poor Sir Francis!" she thought, sitting down in the sand and gazing at the water spouting among the lava rocks. "That will spoil all his great plans, I suppose! But I'm just as glad. I want to be Mary Clum, really; and so I am."

She felt a little sorry for Sir Francis; the vision had been a great one, the dream had appealed to her. The chiefs here would welcome her; both here, and at Maui, fifteen miles away from the north tip of Hawaii. Tauai would fall in line, off at the other end of the group. She would be under French protection, with a French ship of war to back her claim; and what could the enfeebled, dissolute king do then? Nothing except to arrange about the succession. She would succeed him, he would rule while he lived. It would not be long; Kamehameha, third of the name, had few years to go.

"And now, poor Sir Francis must do something else!" she mused and smiled. "Too bad; I might have been a queen. And Abner was in it, too. Abner and my father both."

Dent's name clouded her eyes and banished her smile.

Her dark eyes suddenly quickened upon perplexity. Strange! According to Asa Bishop, her father and mother had fled from here to marry; that would have been long before she was born. Yet, she had childhood memories of the islands. How could this be? Certainly she had been here as a child. She spoke the language; in these late days it had come back to her full force.

THIS reflection had an almost paralyzing effect upon her. There was no escaping the conclusion. Whether or not he was aware of it, Asa Bishop's story had been false. She could not believe that he had deliberately lied, for with such a man a lie was unthinkable. But her childhood memories, vague as they were, and the language upon her lips, proved him wrong. Either Clum and his bride had not fled at once from the islands, and she had been born here . . . or else they had indeed carried away a native child, and she was that child!

"Either way!" she murmured. "Nothing else could fit in. So he was wrong. I'd better not tell him; he might say that this is what comes of telling stories on the Sabbath!" Her eyes danced with amusement for an instant, only to sober again and widen upon the bursting surf. Her father would know the truth, of course; leave it until he showed up. That is, if he were really her father!

A VOICE broke in upon her abstraction. "*Aloha! Nui, nui, aloha!*"

She made response almost mechanically and glanced up. A woman, an old woman leaning on a stick, stood close by, peering at her. At sight of the woman's costume, Nahiena looked again, astonished; the old native dress was not employed in and about the village, particularly on Sundays. A wide, gay *maru* and a scarf circled the woman's body, bone necklaces hung on her skinny chest, and flowers decked her head and were strung about her shoulders.

"*Aloha, Nahiena!*" she repeated, and gave the name in its full familiarity. "You do not know me, Nahiena-ene?"

The girl leaped to her feet. Recognition tore at her; no, no, impossible!

"Keave!" she burst out. "It cannot be . . . you are dead!"

The old woman laughed hideously, baring toothless gums.

"Keave never dies, Nahiena. Long ago, hundreds of years ago, Keave ruled Hawaii and all the islands. Now I bear his name. Now the *hare o Keave*, the sacred house where his bones lay, has been destroyed by the white men and our false rulers; but his bones are safe. I have them. There is another *hare o Keave*, another house of Keave, and I can take you to it if you desire—"

"Keave! It's you, it's really you!" The girl broke in upon this harangue with hotly impetuous words. She flung herself forward, embraced the old crone, and drew back to gaze into her eyes. "Then the ship did not sink! Then he is safe, is safe!"

"He?" Keave laughed shrilly. "Oh, the white man with one hand! He who has an iron hook for a hand! Yes, he is safe. He sent me to bring you to him."

"Where, where?" Nahiena flew into a transport of joy and eagerness. Tears were on her cheeks, laughter on her lips. She laughed and cried and spoke, all at once. "Where is he?"

The crone waved her stick at the desolate lava hills which, uninhabited and in

great part unknown, pressed close down against the seashore.

"There," she said. "Not far. In the house of Keave."

"In your house?" burst out the girl. "Oh, then take me there, quickly!"

"Not my house." Keave drew herself up. "The house of Keave!"

Nahiena comprehended, and quieted. The old crone was named after the deity, a legendary ruler of the islands in the dim past. The missionaries aboard ship had said that she used to be a priestess of the ancient gods, but had recanted. Nahiena perceived that the hag had merely temporized with new conditions, and secretly retained all her staunch belief.

"Keave, speak English!" exclaimed the girl. "You can do it. I've heard you. You were in America. Tell me—"

"I told you. He is waiting. It is not far," broke in Keave, refusing absolutely to speak English. "Do you come?"

"Yes. Oh, yes, yes!"

They set out together, Keave turning her back on the shore and hobbling along at a pace which kept Nahiena almost at a run. They struck into a path that led straight back toward the near-by hills, mounting and ever mounting, until the shore was gone and the sea was gone, and they were in a new world of jagged rock and towering greenery.

Abruptly, Keave halted. She beckoned Nahiena aside, away from the path that was now no more than a faint track. Next instant they stood in a tiny glade, solidly enclosed by tree-ferns and brush. On the ground lay a package wrapped in leaves.

"There's nothing here!" Nahiena cried as she glanced around.

**K**EAve grinned and pointed. "Those clothes! You cannot enter the house of Keave dressed as a foreigner. The spirit of Kamehameha the Great is there; you shall see him. He would call down the wrath of the old gods if he saw you, dressed like this. Quickly, quickly! Off with those clothes and leave them here until you return, lest you offend the powers. Do you think the ancient gods have lost their power in the land? No, no!"

She cackled with laughter and pointed with her thumb.

"They are there now, in the house of Keave; all the old gods are there! Tika, the goddess of Maui; the stone gods of

Ranai, the gods of the sea! They are alive, and Keave the Great lives, and Kamehameha lives with them . . . they all shall be seen of men this very day, for the chiefs are gathering at my call. You shall see them, shall hold in your arms the man with the iron hand—quickly!"

Nahiena's brain, until now occupied with the tremendous fact of Abner Dent being alive and near, began to comprehend other things. These gods Keave mentioned—were they idols of former days, hidden away in safety from destruction? The village was almost deserted today. Why?

The strange, nervous attitude of the native chiefs in the past day or so; Asa Bishop had commented on it this morning. Keave, alive and not dead, prating of gods and kings, summoning the chiefs—what did it all mean?

Vaguely, Nahiena comprehended that something strange and terrible and perhaps even wonderful was happening. What? Oh, never mind! All that now mattered was that Abner Dent was alive, and Keave was taking her to him!

**W**ITH sharp, swift laughter, Nahiena pulled off the demure fichu and dropped it. She flew at the shoes and the clothes so carefully provided for the castaway from the mission stores; shoes and stockings fell upon the ground. Keave was opening her leaf-wrapped bundle to display native garments. A gasp of wonder and admiration escaped the girl at sight of a feather robe, glittering golden yellow in the sunlight that filtered down through the greenery, a robe so gorgeous as to seem unreal, itself of woven sunbeams!

Now she had the modest, ugly dress over her head. After it she pitched her undergarments. She stood erect, laughing excitedly, and stretched out a hand toward the feather robe.

Keave checked her.

"No, no! That is last of all. It is the robe of Kamehameha himself. You must wait. First the oil; yes, you are white, too white! You must have the sacred oil—"

Nahiena laughed again, excitedly, and held out her arms, a slim strong figure of loveliness unashamed. The old crone opened a corked gourd, and began to rub the glistening coconut oil, combined with some brownish stain, on face and shoulders and limbs and rounded breasts.



# Our Readers Write Us

## FROM MID-PACIFIC

Dear Editor:

Have just given my August Blue Book to a wistful-eyed lad on Johnston Island—an aviation "listening post" which an aroused nation is building here in mid-Pacific. Those lads have few enough pleasures, what with a six-months stay and a supply-ship only once every six weeks; besides, I've now squared my debt to an American Standard Oil manager in Brazil who started my Blue Book habit several years ago by giving me his well-thumbed copy.

Since that fortunate day your delightful periodical has become one of my household lares, or maybe penates, and a bad night ensues when I reach the news-stand too late for a copy, since my small sons know when it should arrive, and clamor for their mother to read aloud "Arms and Men," "Ships and Men," "Red Wolf of Arabia," "Black Horse Troop," and others.

Of them all, my preference is for the musical words, the charming alliteration in the Irish folk-stories by Dwyer. (I believe that's the name.) However, writers of yarns mentioned above are close aboard in my esteem.

Among the illustrators—all good—I have no choice except to note that Morton Stoops wields a clever brush and picks dramatic incidents unfailingly well.

What do I like about Blue Book? All of it. Continue novels—detective tales, if others demand, but for me, the Missus and boys—well, I've told you what types we've enjoyed these many years. May the source never run dry.

Henry C. Kavanaugh  
U. S. S. Richmond

En route Johnston Island to Midway Island.

## AN "EASY CHAIR" DEPARTMENT

Editor of Letters:

I would suggest that the book-length novel—the best editorial move the magazine ever made—should be set smaller. In the pages thus made available I would like to see a non-fiction department—say, three essays of a leisurely, thoughtful type, but cleverly light in tone and texture, on the lines of "The Easy Chair" in Harper's, but make the chair a little easier.

I believe the readers of Blue Book are far above the grade of moron, and although the magazine should cherish its policy of being the leading fiction monthly, I do think that such a section would still further enhance the appeal of Blue Book to the type of reader it seeks to attract. It would provide the after-dinner con-

versation which is such a delightful "topper-offer" to a solid meal partaken in pleasant company.

In format, cover-design, and literary standards, Blue Book as now issued would be hard to beat, though search for new authors should be constant and not even the best writer should appear more than once in a single issue.

Walter M. Barrow  
San Juan, Puerto Rico

## STORIES WITH A SOUL

Editor of Letters:

You are quite right, this is "my magazine." I prefer it to all others. The chief reason I like it is because sex is only incidental to the stories, never the subject of them; further, the choice of the stories is as wide as the world—and as interesting.

I do read the book-length novels and the novelettes, but rarely the serials, because the magazines are passed on too quickly; the last few found their way to a camp of a few hundred recruits almost next door to us.

The stories of bygone times are all right; I enjoy them. The war stories least of all. You see, the absolutely mechanized war of today has very little in common with bygone wars. Also war to the young Canadian is a grim business, to be done thoroughly and then forgotten, not lived eternally.

My favorites are H. Bedford-Jones, Peter B. Kyne and chiefly Beatrice Grimshaw; because their stories have, may I call it, a soul. So have some of the others, but to a less extent.

A. Calderwood  
Esquimalt, B. C., Canada

## A SOLDIER WANTS ARMY STORIES

Editor of Letters:

From 6:30 A. M. till 7:30 P. M. I am the sole occupant of a small lookout tower overlooking the U. S. Army Reservation of Fort Lewis, Washington. My duties consist of reporting any indications of fire in this sector. By a process of elimination I have culled my present-day reading down to a few magazines that have met my standards for good, interesting reading. I have just finished the August Blue Book, and feel the same sense of satisfaction that I experienced when I had the good fortune to first make its acquaintance several years ago.

I believe that we are all guilty of day-dreaming at some time or another; dreaming of travel and adventures that due to circumstances will continue to be just dreams. We

**A**N editor, someone has said, is a man who can keep his ear to the ground while straddling a fence. We are not very good at the straddling business; but perhaps with your help we can do better at the listening. With this idea in mind, we like to receive letters of constructive criticism and suggestion; and for the half-dozen or so we publish each month we will pay the writer ten dollars each.\*

must therefore be contented by getting them secondhand from those more fortunate. In *Blue Book* I revel in those dreams as only a lonely person can.

I am satisfied with *Blue Book* just as it is as far as the type of stories used. The one novel, one novelette, and the serial are perfectly balanced by the short stories and true experiences. However, I would like to tender one little suggestion. Being a soldier myself, I was thinking that a few good stories of our own army might be apropos at this time. Yes, I think a good two-fisted "dough-boy" story is all *Blue Book* needs to round it out.

Pvt. Charles E. Metcalf  
Fort Lewis, Washington

#### BEST WAR STORIES WRITTEN AFTERWARD

##### Editor of Letters:

Like everyone else, I am deeply interested in the war, but let's not have so many war stories in *Blue Book*.

Those spy stories already have half the local would-be G-men peering under the bushes for international spies.

None of us know what is really going on in the present war. It's too big and too closely censored. You can't see the forest for the trees.

The best World War stories were not written during the war but years afterwards. I think this will be true of the present war, when stories can be written in the perspective of time and truth.

D. Stanton  
Valois, New York

#### FICTION LUSTY AND COLORFUL

Dear Sir:

I have heard that as one grows older, he tends to reminisce on the "good old days." Perhaps, then, I belong in the category of those who sit by the fire with a bundle of old letters tied in blue ribbon, for I find the past rich in memories.

When the motion picture found a voice, a new type of material was rushed into service. At the same time, a loyal and worth-while medium was pushed into the background. Instead of the stories of adventure which had served so admirably as the basis for twenty years of pictures, we had a new type of drawing-room play—witty, clever, and entirely lacking in the color and swashbuckling vigor of the stories that had served the silent screen.

Why had this change occurred, and where were the red-blooded and stirring tales which London and Curwood, Sabatini and Grey had

taught the American public to enjoy? They were still being written, it appears, but only for the consumption of those readers who still liked their fiction lusty and colorful. *Blue Book* continued to offer this type of story to its discriminating clientele.

Of course *Blue Book* has kept pace with the years. No magazine can remain static and expect to survive the shifting tastes of the public. But the changes in *Blue Book* are so gradual, so completely attuned to the times, that no radical departure is discernible in its editorial policy.

Frances J. Will  
Bottineau, North Dakota

#### FOR A DIFFERENT FORMAT

##### Editor of Letters:

Many magazine readers get the idea occasionally to write the man responsible for the book he is reading, either in censure for something he does not like, or care for, or possibly to praise him for something that suits him.

In my opinion there is no other magazine published that can satisfy the class of people who now read your *Blue Book*. I have been a B-B fan for many years; have seen the several changes that have been made. Would like again to see it the same size as it was several years ago, as it then would be placed on display alongside of *Redbook*, and other better class of magazines where it belongs, instead of keeping company with a score of blood-and-thunder publications, packed on a shelf.

I had the pleasure early last year of telling a news-dealer to "lay out" the *Blue Book* alongside of *Redbook*, and bet him a box of cigars that he would double the sales by so doing in three months. I smoked the cigars and also made a *Blue Book* fan of him by calling his attention to the story "A Million for John Destiny."

Here's hoping that sometime in the future we may buy a *Blue Book* with the same style stories that we now have and the job made up in same style as *Redbook*.

H. B. F.  
Warren, Pa.

\*Letters should not be longer than two hundred words; no letters can be returned, and all of them will become the property of McCall Corporation. They should be addressed to: Editor of Letters, *Blue Book* Magazine, 230 Park Ave., New York.

The response to our invitation has been so generous that we find it impossible to print as many as we should like to—or to give each one the personal acknowledgment it deserves. We therefore wish here to thank the many other readers who have written their kindly—often too kindly—words of encouragement.



# Trawler Men

**H**ERE and there among the sullen gray seas the greasy smoke and tanned mizzen sails of the trawler fleet leaped and subsided. A dot on the landward horizon was the lightship.

Sam Porret leaned on the rail outside his tiny wheel-house and judged it was time to haul the trawl. He was about to tell the mate to do so, when a faint hum in the eastward sky gained volume rapidly, and his crew popped out of their corners like rabbits from their burrows. Air-raids were no new story to them; yet they greeted each one with fresh interest and curiosity.

"Here come them damned butchers!" yelled the cook, and ducked back into his galley.

Three specks grew to three bombing planes against the bleak sky. The fleet of fishermen cut trawl and scattered.

Sam watched intently. He was no hero, but a fisherman who took his humble job seriously, made his trips, and never took in a poor haul if patience would ensure a good one. He had been bombed from the air by enemy planes often enough to regard such things as more or less part of the day's work; but still there was no bravado in his waiting for the set moment to order the winches started and the catch to be taken on board. If those planes turned toward him, he would order the gear cut adrift as smartly as any man—but until it happened, he only watched his son, young Sam, quietly adjusting some of the gear in readiness for hauling. Young Sam was the apple of his father's eye; twenty, straight and strong, a good-looking lad with proper sea-sense and land-sense as well, fit to face a future which would be better when this queer war was over. Had a nice girl, too, who would make a home for him as soon as he reached twenty-one and got a ship of his own. That was a pleasant thought for old Sam, whose own home had never been more than a house since Betsy died in giving him a son. The father's entire interest in life was bound up in the son, and no two men had ever been closer in spirit.

"Look at that! They've found a new dirty trick, Dad!"

Sam looked where his son pointed. A trawler was sinking far off, and the two little specks which were her boats were midway between her and the distant lightship. A fisherman got to expect simple fishing smacks to be bombed and sunk, her men machine-gunned in the boats or in the water—it made no difference to the madmen flying the planes; but this was something never before attempted, a crime against all the traditions of the sea. The planes were leaving the fishermen for a moment, and were diving upon the lightship.

"The swine!" muttered Sam.

"Ought to give us guns!" said his smart young mate, who had stepped up beside him. "Look at that!"

**A**BURST of flame and smoke rose from the lightship, and another. Through the glasses Sam saw the amazed crew hurriedly clearing away their boat, taken utterly by surprise by such an undreamed-of attack. Then slowly the lightship sank, and swiftly one of the planes swept over her boat with crackle of bullets. Sam was so intent that he forgot to keep an eye upon the other planes, until a dull roar and a geyser of water not fifty yards away warned him of the more imminent attack.

"Cut the warp! Let that trawl go!" he shouted, and rang to the engine-room to stand by. The mate leaped from the bridge.

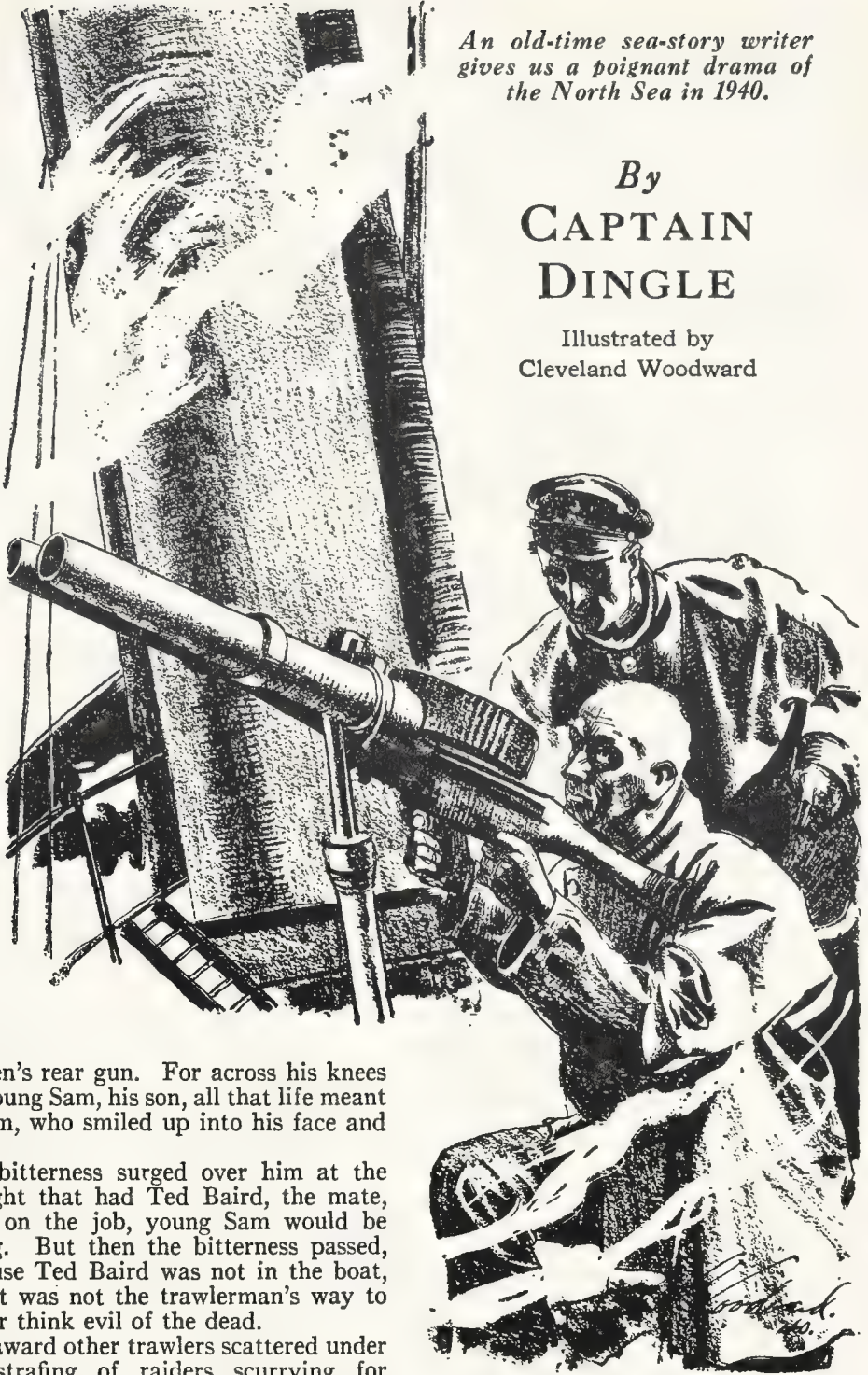
Now bullets were spattering the decks; a drum of petrol exploded, blocking the galley door; men who started to cut the warp hesitated, ducking the leaden hail. Only one man went on: young Sam, as cool as if bullets were no more than rain. He swung his ax; the warp parted; the trawler went ahead and began to turn; then the plane spewed a hell of lead all along the deck, and let fall a bomb which took off the ship's bows like a knife.

Sam only knew that it ought to have been the mate who cut the warp—that young Sam had done it. Then he was in the water, the trawler gone like a bottomless bucket. He was dazed for a while; then he was in his small-boat, sitting in the stern-sheets, knowing or caring nothing about the parting hail of machine-gun bullets from the jubilant

*An old-time sea-story writer  
gives us a poignant drama of  
the North Sea in 1940.*

*By*  
**CAPTAIN  
DINGLE**

Illustrated by  
Cleveland Woodward



airmen's rear gun. For across his knees lay young Sam, his son, all that life meant to him, who smiled up into his face and died.

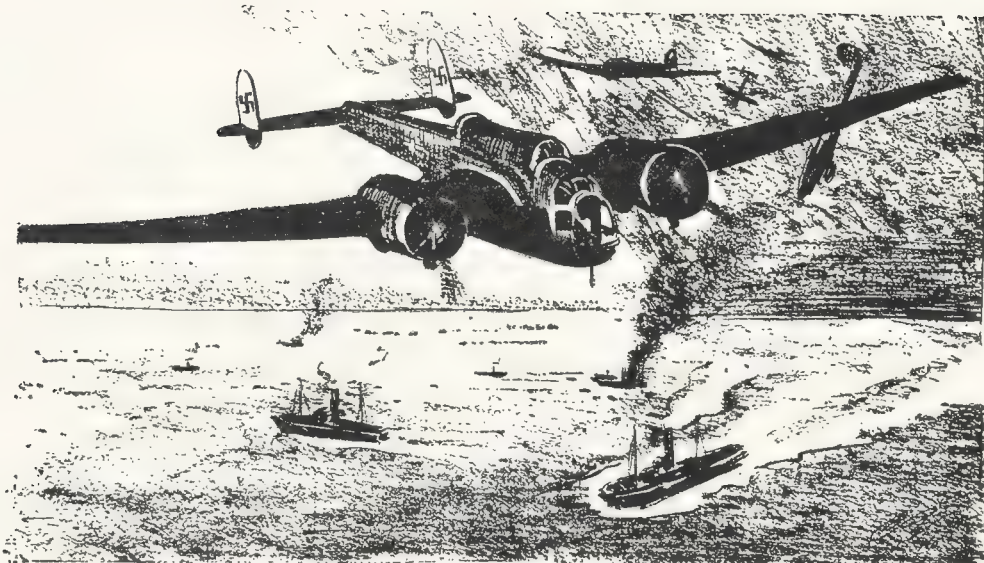
A bitterness surged over him at the thought that had Ted Baird, the mate, been on the job, young Sam would be living. But then the bitterness passed, because Ted Baird was not in the boat, and it was not the trawlerman's way to say or think evil of the dead.

Seaward other trawlers scattered under the strafing of raiders scurrying for home before the advancing fighter planes; but Sam Porret sat gazing somberly ahead and gave no thought to either. Day faded, and night came down; but where the friendly lightship should have winked its guiding eye, black darkness lay over the sea. Some-

where in the darkness the fishermen in the small-boat heard a destroyer roar by, her swift progress drowning their shouts for help....

Dawn broke; men changed places at the oars; the boat held a course by stars





and dawnlight; then a patrol plane sighted it, radioed the position, and before noon a mine-sweeper picked up the crew, and landed them in their home port.

Many of the trawlermen were away to sea again within twenty-four hours; others declared their intention of joining up with the Navy to get a bit of their own back from the enemy. Sam was still dazed as he made arrangements for young Sam's funeral; but people were helpful, knowing his lonely state; and most helpful of them all was Nan, Ted Baird's young wife.

"You got troubles enough o' your own, Missus," Sam growled.

"Not too many to lend a hand, Sam." The girl smiled bleakly. "I won't believe Ted's gone until I feel it—and I don't feel it yet. Go out and talk to the men. Leave the boy to me."

So Nan Baird, who was soon to bring into the world Ted's child who might never know a father, prepared young Sam for burial and never let anybody see the pain in her eyes—least of all, old Sam.

After the burial, Sam made inquiries about the section of the Naval Reserve especially asking for trawlermen. There were armed trawlers, mine-sweepers, patrol vessels, all needing the older men of the fishing fleet; and for the youngsters there was the proper Navy. Many of Sam's old shipmates had already belonged to the Reserve, and most of these were doing their bit behind guns afloat; the sweeper that picked up Sam's boat

was almost entirely manned by such men. Of course, the skipper was usually either a Reserve man of long service or a Navy man of junior rank, but Sam believed that any trawlerman sound in wind and limb who was actively employed as skipper would be eagerly snapped up and given an armed vessel to command.

He went away to the Naval base and joined up.

"You'll be detailed to gunnery school, Porret, then to a mine-sweeping course. Ought to be at sea again in a month," the young officer told him. "Lot of men from your home port. Like to get a ship with old shipmates, eh?"

"As long's I get a ship with a gun, the mates don't matter!" Sam answered.

He went to school, not like an eager boy, but like a man with a far-off view of something only to be attained by travail and sweat, who reluctantly accepted the assurance of a teacher making funny signs on a blackboard that the travail and sweat would be halved by understanding his teachings. Shrewd, as a good trawlerman must be, Sam grasped the things he was shown, and held on to what he learned. He already possessed most of the knowledge necessary to mine-sweeping, for he had towed a trawl over many thousands of miles of sea bed; when they let him into the secrets of a machine-gun, he discovered unexpected magic in his sight and touch which made gunnery simple. He was the oldest man in his class; he passed out among the first batch for sea.

He was given joining leave, and visited young Sam's grave. He was shy of being seen carrying a bunch of flowers to place there, but he needn't have been, for the grave was neat and tended; flowering plants had been set around it, and were already bursting into bud. He laid his offering on the turf and went to find a lodging for the period of leave, for when he left to join up, he had given up the rooms he had shared with his boy. On the way he called to thank Nan Baird, knowing nobody else who could have shown solicitude over that grave.

"Why, Sam!" she cried, and confused him with the warmth of her welcome. He had expected to find her fading with grief, for it was six weeks since the trawler was sunk. Her eyes were shining, and she was vibrant with life, though heavy with life yet unborn. "We were talking about you only yesterday. You knew Ted was picked up, didn't you? Landed two days after you went away. Look—" She ran and lifted a framed picture from the mantel. It was Ted Baird, smart and smiling in his Naval uniform. "He went up two weeks ago, had his leave, and left yesterday for the depot. Come in, do, and have a cup o' tea, Sam."

SAM fumbled with his cap—in consideration of his long experience in trawling, they had given him a petty officer's rating—and sat uneasily on the edge of a chair while the girl rattled about and chattered on:

"Ted's lucky, isn't he, being in the Reserve so long? He didn't have to do so much training." She set tea and buttered bread before him, and sat down. She tried to look into his eyes, but his gaze was lowered. "Ted felt badly about your Sam," she said gently. "He told me as we were planting those flowers that if he had been handy to cut the warp, your boy wouldn't have—"

"Where was he?" demanded old Sam, abruptly meeting her eye. "That's what I've wanted to know ever since—"

Sam stopped, his lips grimly taut. The girl's bright eyes clouded at his expression, and she breathed, almost in an inaudible whisper: "If Ted had gone to cut that warp, I'd be—"

"Yes ma'am. You'd be a widdier afore you're a mother," Sam said gravely. "Forget it, my dear. Ted's safe; you're happy, and nawthin' can hurt my boy no more. I aint the only father who'll lose a son afore the war's over. Thankee

for the tay. Hope yer Ted'll git plenty o'luck, and the leetle fella be as lucky when he's born."

Impulsively the girl took old Sam's scrubby face between her hands and kissed him. Then, laughing shakily, she handed him his new uniform cap, peeping inside the rim as she did so.

"Luck to you too, Sam! Come back safe, and hurry up and get promotion. Ted's been given warrant rank in the Navy, 'count of his long time in the Reserve. He said you ought to have joined years ago just to be ready for this."

"I been skipper o' trawlers, aint I?" grunted Sam. "He aint never skippered nawthin'. Anyhow, mistress, best o' luck to you and all o' yours. You been nice to me."

When his leave was up, Sam Porret reported at the patrol base, and found himself among old buddies of the trawler fleet. Being an old fisherman, it made him snort to see so many whom he had regarded as youngsters wearing the uniform of higher rank than elderly men who had skippered trawlers like himself. But he knew that when his number was called to join a ship, it would be as skipper, nothing less. He saw Ted Baird, at a distance, entering another office, looking smart as paint with his golden oak-leaf cap badge and his twisty gold sleeve-bands. Well, gold was pretty, but gingerbread never made a sailor if the salt wasn't in his veins.

Then his turn came to stand at the table where vessels were manned. He and fifteen other men answered to the muster call, and stood waiting for their skipper. They were appointed to the patrol leader of six armed trawlers, the whole commanded by a lieutenant-commander of the regular Navy; most of the seaman branch of the little crew had some notion regarding the routine of these ships, knew there would be a skipper of the trawler besides the patrol commander—the small warship was in a way the flagship of the patrol; and with five of the eight seamen of the crew old trawler skippers, there was a buzz of conjecture. Sam Porret scarcely bothered to conjecture; he growled and seethed with resentment.

THE little crowd moved toward the door, where against the bright sunlight stood silhouetted a uniformed figure calling them by name. Sam's name was called first—he was to go as mate. He stepped outside, clumsily saluted, as he



had learned reluctantly to do, and met his skipper.

"Well, Sam, we're shipmates again," smiled Skipper Baird. "We sha'n't be caught defenceless this time."

Sam jerked out of his habitual slouch, his brows puckered.

"Be I to goo mate with the likes o' you?" he stuttered. "How come you be my skipper—" Sam choked; then it came with a rush: "Who's a-goo'in' to cut warp for 'ee this trip?"

MEN snickered, but straightened their faces when the Skipper glared. Baird's face went white. Sam muttered, remembering a grave and planted flowers: "Didn't ought to ha' said that, Ted. Let's git aboard."

Skipper Baird smiled bleakly, called off the other names, and led the way to a gray trawler whose foredeck had been built up into a gun platform on which was a twelve-pounder. At the stumpy mizzen truck fluttered a smudged and tattered flag; it was hardly distinguishable from the grimy red ensigns of a thousand tramp steamers, but here and there the field showed that once it was white. As they came abreast of the gangplank, Baird nodded toward the flag.

"Takes a bit of getting used to, Sam, but we all have to remember we're at war and under that white ensign now. No place for jealousy or resentment. You'd have been skipper, and I'd have been mate, if you had joined the Reserve and I hadn't. We can be a happy ship if we pull together—and there'll be no helpless target for flying madmen this time."

Sam took up his duties, understanding the changed conditions, abiding by them whatever his personal feelings might be. He saw to the loading of depth-charges, and ammunition for the twelve-pounder and two old Lewis guns; he saw the lieutenant-commander come aboard and go into the little wheelhouse with Baird. And as he was coming away from the stern, Sam saw another old shipmate, the cook of his late trawler.

"Fambly party, a'most, aint we, Sam?" grinned the cook. "I like to know jes' how young Ted come to be skipper, an' you only mate. Bet you do too, eh?"

The cook had been one of those missing from Sam's boat; he had been picked up with Ted Baird afterward. He had been a dirty trawler's cook, and looked as if he would be a dirty naval cook, once the polish of the depot wore off.

"Git about yer work!" snarled Sam. "We're in the Navy now."

"Aye-aye, sir!" the cook grinned, making a mock salute. "Jes' the same, I knows where he was when we was blowed up. I bet that commander fella'll see he don't duck if we gits shot at this time."

"Duck?" Sam echoed the word fiercely; but the cook had slipped inside his galley; the iron door slammed, and while still fumbling at the catch with fingers that trembled in sudden rage, Sam heard the order which sent him to his post on the tiny forecandle for taking the ship to sea.

As the little flotilla headed out into the misty North Sea, and the Aldis lamp on the patrol leader's bridge signaled the commander's orders to the other vessels, Sam gradually got into the mood of his new job. Everything was so quietly efficient, so orderly though outwardly so like normal trawler routine; instead of the otter-trawl gear for fishing, there was the Oropesa sweep gear, which permitted a single ship to tow a mine-sweeping cable that otherwise required a pair; aft, stowed on a runway toward the cutaway rail, lay deadly depth-charges which looked hardly more dangerous than a trawler's spare oil-drums. The gunner at the twelve-pounder saw that his gun was ready and equipped with ammunition; the radio operator sat over his desk with phones clamped to his ears; eight seamen, an engineer, stoker and the cook—every man wearing a life-jacket throughout the patrol—all went about their job as coolly as if the trawler were after fish. They moved about easily, all except the lookouts, and the commander, who was stuck up there on the "monkey island" atop of the wheelhouse, and would stay there through hell and high water until the patrol was finished.

NOW and then a coastal patrol plane overhead reported a mine adrift at some given position, and then everybody handy grabbed a rifle and watched his chance to pot-shot at it when sighted. Sometimes a lucky shot hit a detonator horn and exploded the mine; more often, several bullets from one of the serviceable if old-model Lewis guns sank it harmless. Sam hardly raised his head from whatever he was doing when these shots rang out. He was puzzling his brain over what the cook had said. It worried him.

He finished with the depth-charge gear and the towing gear for the Oropesa, and

## TRAWLER MEN

turned to join the lookouts with the skipper on the bridge.

"Have a cup o' coffee, Sam?" the cook invited him as he passed the galley. "Likely you won't git no chance, soon's we start sweepin'. Here!"

Sam looked hard at the cook.

"Either you said too much or not enough!" he said. "What was that about Ted Baird?"

"Don't you go sayin' I spoke outa my turn about the skipper!" the cook warned him. "'Sides, we'm in Navy now. You said so yourself. I aint sayin' nawthin' about Ted Baird—why should I, him as hauled me clear when we was blowed up to hell. If he hadn't been in my galley—"

"So that's where he ducked to!" growled Sam, and hurled the empty coffee-cup onto the galley floor. He left the cook grinning slyly behind his back and made his way to the bridge. Skipper Baird didn't look like a man who would duck under fire, as he stood there in proud command of his little ship, under the eye of the commander.

Sam noticed the attitude of every man on deck; rigid at his post, scanning every fathom of visible sea for mine or periscope, listening intently at the same time for the drone of planes overhead. Soon the grip of it seized him; he too kept a keen lookout. But he never stopped thinking.

So that was how it came about. Young Sam was in his grave at that moment because Ted Baird ran like a rat for the shelter of the galley when lead began to spit! And Baird standing there big as Billy-be-damned, with his pretty gold braid and the commander's approving eye upon him! No wonder his young wife was proud of him! She didn't know!

At noon the crew went to dinner; when they had finished, the Oropesa would be launched, and after that there would be no more stand-easy. A vessel at liberty to maneuver might stand a chance against bombers, but not when tethered to the drag of a long sweep. Sam went into his cubbyhole of a berth



Across his knees lay young Sam—all that life meant to him.



to snatch a smoke before going on long watch, and there was a parcel on his bunk. He opened it gloomily enough, and discovered a knitted Balaclava helmet with a note pinned to it.

*I hope it fits, Sam. I only had your cap size to go by. Take care of my Ted for me. His son will be born by time he comes home. And good luck to you. Nan Baird.*

"If he's the sort I figger he is, his son'll be better off wi'out him!" muttered Sam, tossing the gift into the bunk. But as he went on deck, he failed utterly to drive from his mind the kindness he had experienced in Ted Baird's home. That was not right, not the sort of thing to be expected in the home of such a man. That sort of man never deserved to have such a home. Or such a wife.

Unless he misjudged Ted Baird. But the cook ought to know. A man surely wouldn't damn a shipmate who saved his life.

THE Oropesa was launched, and Sam took his position beside the skipper; now the job was on hand, he forgot all else. Baird stood alert as a terrier waiting for a rat, keen, fearless, impersonal. Sam sneaked glances at him as planes began to dot the eastward sky, and suddenly the Oropesa caught a loose mine far out, exploding it by contact, sending the ship reeling, and showering her with steel fragments. It was not Ted Baird who ducked, but Sam, who involuntarily wrapped his head in his arms.

"These bees sting, don't they?" Baird grinned at him, and Sam saw him grip his arm, and his face twitch with pain. A red drip from the skipper's sleeve made a puddle around his feet.

"I can look out here. You're hurted," said Sam, then noticed Baird's eyes, and added fiercely: "Needn't think I be tryin' to get a cheap command—not even for as long as you'd be off the deck gettin' that fixed up!"

Baird laughed, shakily, pointing to Sam's face.

"Don't talk cracked, Sam. If anybody needs fixing up, it's you!"

"Stop talking down there! Keep your eyes open!" ordered the commander from the monkey island. Then a plane grew swiftly into menace overhead; Lewis guns and the twelve-pounder spat and barked at it, but a sizzling hail of machine-gun bullets swept the trawler from end to end. And as the great war-

plane roared past, barely clearing the stumpy masts, she dropped a bomb which fell into the sea abreast of where men were hauling in the sweep to replace the shattered Oropesa, casualty from the exploded mine.

"That's their calling-card, Sam!" remarked Baird, and looked up at the commander. The monkey island was bare. Sam, his gaze going ahead to the sky, in which other planes appeared like monstrous birds growing larger, saw the gunner crumpled beside his twelve-pounder.

"Let that towing gear go!" shouted the skipper, and leaped onto the rail and onto the monkey island where the commander lay coughing out his life.

The ship was slowing down, and then stopped; the other numbers in the patrol drew past her, engaging the approaching planes and forcing them to leave the crippled ship. Sam took charge instinctively, but found himself bewildered. No bomb had struck the vessel, but she had been fiercely sprayed with bullets from low altitude, and a bomb had exploded close alongside, racking her. Men huddled in queer attitudes about the deck; some never moved again. Sam picked up the speaking-tube to call the engine-room; but before he spoke, the engineer climbed onto the bridge.

"Stoker's got it," the engineer said, then grinned at Sam. "You got it too. Yer face, Sam. Where's the skipper?"

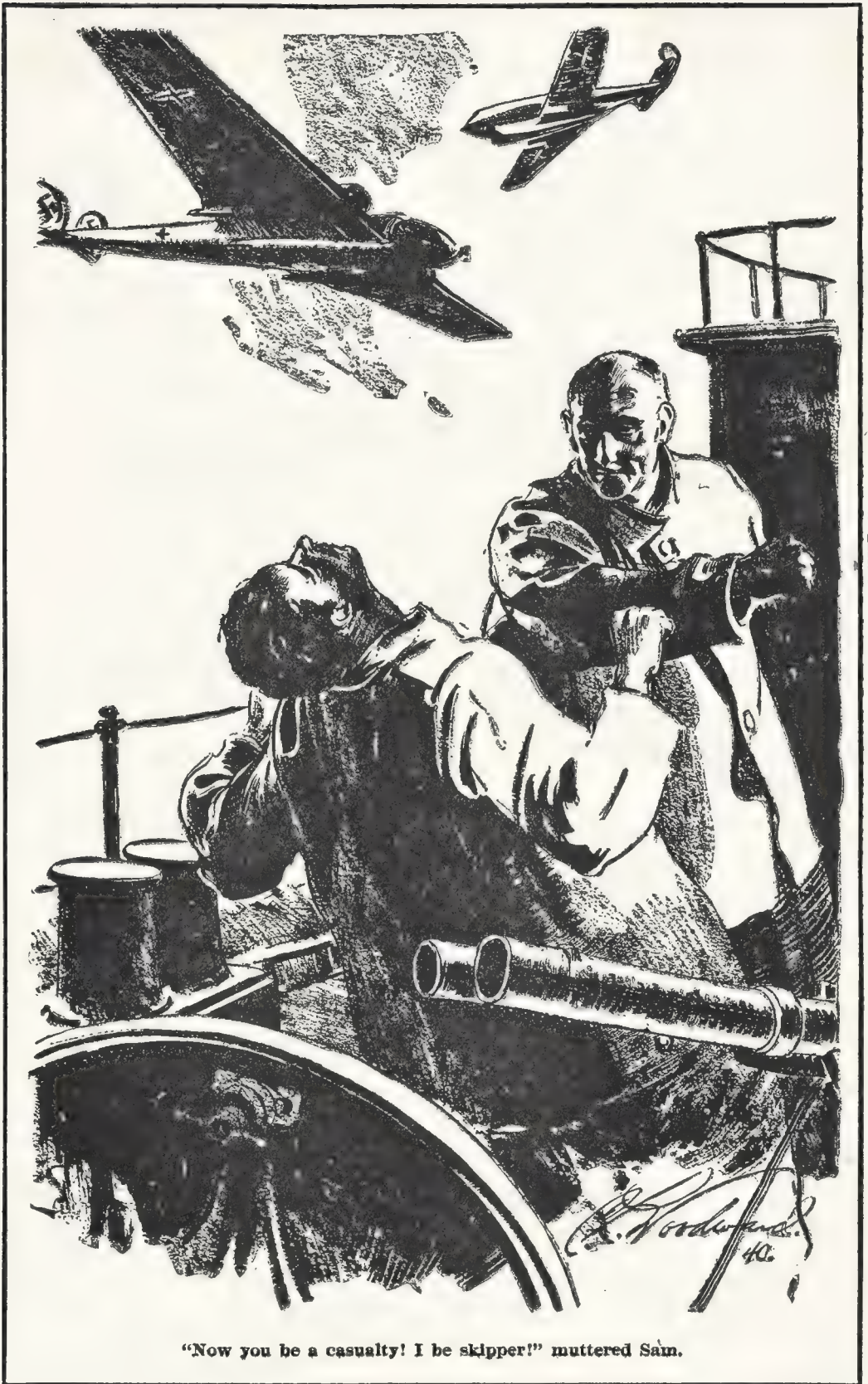
"Commander's got it too, seemin'ly," said Sam, jerking his thumb upward. "What's up wi' the machinery? Stoker aint stopped that."

"Bullet!" the engineer returned crisply, adding, "Steampipe!" and then Sam saw the after part of the ship clouded with escaping steam. "I got to have men, Sam."

SAM climbed to the rail to look over the monkey island platform, seeking orders from the skipper. The little platform was bare. He looked down, and saw Baird, with the commander on his shoulders, staggering toward the companionway door.

Sam shouted: "Git what men you need. Take the cook—he aint no use nowhere else."

"Cook's no good to me either!" The engineer was angry; he was impatient to get his engines working again, having had all the experience he wanted of being a sitting target for a murder plane. "That skunk's shut tight inside his gal-



"Now you be a casualty! I be skipper!" muttered Sam.



ley—same as he was when we got blown up afore. Ted Baird ought to ha' left him there, 'stead o' nigh gettin' drowned himself haulin' him clear! Ted aint the sort to duck, though he's scared stiff o' leavin' his missus a widder."

"Cook said—" stammered Sam, watching in fascination the evolutions of the planes. Another patrol vessel reeled and began to sink as he watched.

"Cook!" yelled the engineer, clattering away and dragging men by the arm as he went. His words came in a shriek above the din of exploding bombs as he vanished toward the engine-room.

"Didn't Nan Baird smack his ugly mug for makin' a play for her? Cook—"

**B**ULLETS began to sing again. The helpless vessel lay exposed, one Lewis gun out of action and the other having no gunner after the first renewed burst of fire from above. Sam was still not altogether clear as to what he ought to do, Navy fashion, with the commander and skipper both off the bridge; but he was clear enough in his own mind what trawler-fashion would be. He left the bridge, ran to the sound Lewis gun, and put in some of the marksmanship he had discovered at the gunnery school. He got the oncoming plane in his sights, waited, then raked her. He saw the holes run along her fuselage like holes along a flute, and bits fly from her wings before she flashed out of range to turn. He dragged a fresh loading of cartridges handy and waited.

Distant fishermen were scattering; far off, a destroyer's smoke blurred the horizon; Aldis lamps on the remaining units of the patrol flashed inquiries to the leader; Sparks stood outside his shack, gazing aloft at wrecked aërials. Sam saw men at the davits, clearing away the boats, and shouted to them to stop. Then Skipper Baird was at his side, pale with loss of blood from his still dripping arm, but smiling grimly. As he began to speak, the enemy plane roared past again; a bomb fell, missing the stern with its depth charges by feet, spraying bullets along the decks from stern to bow. Sam felt a thud at his back, a numbness, then a flaming hurt which made him grip his gun more fiercely.

"We're for it, Sam!" Baird said. "Last words the commander said—he's dead, Sam—were, 'Fight it out!' Ship's filling with water. No use murdering our lads. Get to the boats—here, it'll be

cold tonight." He handed Sam the Balaclava helmet. "Thought you might need it—picked it from your bunk. Give me the gun—"

"You goin' to 'bandon ship? Arter the commander said to fight it out?" Sam refused to give up the gun. Baird was insistent.

"*You're* going to, Sam. Look after the lads, and—if I go under, look after Nan—and—"

Baird was swaying. Already two planes had straightened out again and were climbing for the decisive attack. There was no fear in the eye of Ted Baird. His lips were set. Both boats were afloat, close alongside, partly protected by the vessel's hull as she leaned.

"Look arter Nan yourself, Ted. I'm collectin' a debt—"

Baird shoved Sam from the gun.

"Don't be a fool! Skipper leave his ship? Get into the boat, Mr. Porret! It's an order!" said Baird, and shoved Sam with a shoulder. The planes had gained height, were coming on.

Sam stepped back. He gave one comprehensive glance around; then, from behind, he slugged the skipper with all his strength under the ear. He caught him as he fell. Nobody in the boats could have seen.

"Now you be a casualty! I be skipper!" muttered Sam. He got under Baird, staggered to the rail with him, dropped him into a boat, and ran back to the gun.

Another patrol vessel was steaming up, firing at the planes as the boats pulled toward her. Sam was coldly steady now as he waited for his sights to come on at close range. He saw a bomb leave the carrier; the machine-guns were silent, but before the bomb struck, he let go a full burst which ripped the plane from end to end.

Plane came flaming down, and bomb struck its mark at the same instant. The distant destroyer was foaming along now; defence planes dotted the sky; the hurrying patrol-boat paused to pick up the boats.

Then it went on to pick up three enemy airmen from the wreck of their plane, and give them cigarettes and rum. It moved slowly among wreckage and bodies, some unrecognizable; but in one dead hand was a new and unworn Balaclava helmet.

Skipper Baird saw it, and understood. He fingered a lump under one ear, and muttered a sailor's silent prayer.

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A BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL

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# ONE FOR THE MONEY

By WILLIAM EDWARD HAYES

*Author of "Black Chronicle" and "Before  
the Cock Crowed."*



*Illustrated by Percy Leason*

DETECTIVE HALSTEAD AND HIS  
SPRIGHTLY SECRETARY COME TOO  
LATE TO SAVE THE BRIDEGROOM,  
BUT REMAIN TO DEAL WITH  
TWO MURDERS, AND SOLVE THE  
MYSTERY OF WALDREDGE HALL.

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COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE

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"Hold it, you! I got you covered—" The next second Halstead was on top of him.

# ONE FOR THE MONEY

By WILLIAM EDWARD HAYES

*who wrote "The Glory Road," and "Out of Control."*

MR. ARTHUR HALSTEAD was in the throes of deep mental anguish as he hurried through the unseasonably warm Washington mist. Yet Mr. Halstead should have been happy, for he was, according to the papers, a highly successful criminologist. He seldom believed what he saw in the public press, however; and considered himself a private dick, or shamus, or gumshoe, who'd had a measure of luck. True, his suite in a handsome Washington office-building looked as if it might house a firm of corporation attorneys. There were blue curtains, rust and blue and yellow tones in the decorations; his desk was wide and spacious, with chased silver ash-trays—a lot of elegance that wouldn't be there if he'd had his own way about it.

But he didn't have his own way. His secretary Marie Burton saw to that. . . . Miss Burton was alert and efficient, tall and dark, with shapely legs. When Mr. Halstead acquired her, he also acquired the blue curtains and the leather upholstery, to say nothing of a certain standard of business deportment to which he had to conform.

Now as he walked rapidly along, he realized it was because Miss Burton had told him to hurry. He at once halted in front of a camera-store window, threw back his shoulders and tilted his chin with sudden defiance and determination.

He would not, he told himself, hurry another step. Whose birthday was this, anyhow? What if Marie Burton did want to get out of the office for an hour or so to do some special shopping and make arrangements for an informal party?

There was a nice chromium-and-black lens-shade down in the corner of that

window. He ought to have that for his camera. He could buy himself a birthday present right here. He stared wistfully down at the lens-shade. He would never have got mixed up with this camera business if it hadn't been for Miss Marie Burton's insistence that he develop a hobby. Photography was hers, and she had been so sure that he'd like it too. She had taken him to her dark-room to see her negatives, and—

Halstead boldly entered the brightly-lighted shop, and halted before the showcase in the accessory department—so abruptly that the large gentleman who had been at his elbow at the window outside bumped sharply into him. Halstead lifted sad eyes in apology, and mentally photographed a round, pasty face that he did not like.

The large gentleman seemed in a huff; but before Halstead could say more than, "Sorry," a clerk with a vast professional cheerfulness was there.

The clerk said, "You're a stranger, Mr. Halstead!" with an effusive gesture. "Did you get some good shots with those filters I sold you?"

"I didn't get anything," Halstead answered mournfully. "Maybe I can do better if I get a shade for the lens. Like that black one there."

The clerk shook his head. "Sorry; we haven't one your size in stock. Anything else?"

"That's all." Halstead turned glumly. He looked over the other things in the showcase, but his eyes were alert to the conversation at the next counter.

The large gentleman with the pasty face was saying: "I said it was about a two by four size," as if he had been describing lumber.



"Perhaps you mean the 116 size," the clerk answered. "That's two and a half—"

"That's it," the man said. "Gimme a roll of that." He seemed all at once impatient.

Halstead strolled toward the door, frowned and went outside. Out of a growing curiosity, he stopped. From the corner of his eye he saw the large man come hustling out, pause, look along the street in both directions, then walk across to the other side, suddenly calm and casual about it.

**T**URNING, Halstead made his way rapidly toward his own building. Once he glanced over his shoulder, and this time he came close to a smile. He stopped at the drug-store on the corner and shut himself in a phone-booth.

Marie Burton's throaty voice answered the call.

"Where's Pinky?" Halstead asked.

"Just a minute." There was a long pause. Then: "I'm speaking from your private office," Marie said. "You've got a visitor—"

"I don't care about a visitor. I want Pinky."

"He's out in the hall waiting for you. He—"

"Go tell him to meet me down in the drug-store," Halstead snapped. He was staring out through the booth window and across the street.

"Right." Marie hung up.

Halstead was buying cigarettes at the cigar-counter when Pinky, a small, shabby man with baggy pants and a battered old brief-case, suddenly appeared. Mr. Wilson looked like a harmless little person who, if given a chance, would open his brief-case and bring out soiled literature and try meekly to convince you that you ought to buy a set of books, or some polish for your car, or some gadget for your kitchen.

"The pasty-faced guy in the brown topcoat over there in that doorway," Halstead said in lowered tones. "I want a line on him."

Pinky stole a glance through the fog. "Maybe—say, boss! You think he's—"

"What's this business of you waiting in the hall upstairs for me? Miss Burton said—"

"Wait'll you see her," Pinky said brightly. His watery eyes beamed.

"Who?"

"Toots has got her anchored. If she aint a blimp—"

"All right, she's a blimp. Only I'd like to know who—"

"Didn't Toots tell you? Didn't—"

"Cut out that *Toots* business," Halstead snapped. "The name's Miss Burton to you, shamus. And Miss Burton didn't tell me anything on the phone."

"We got a client," Pinky answered patiently. "The blimp. She's from Maryland."

"I don't like Maryland," Halstead muttered. "Every time somebody comes here from Maryland, the case turns out to be something messy, and—" He squinted at Pinky.

"What's the idea of planting you in the hall to warn me about her?" Halstead demanded. He began rummaging through his pockets. Pinky took the new package of cigarettes out of Halstead's right hand and opened it.

"You won't be able to stand this when I tell you."

"Don't be in any hurry. I can wait here all day—"

"Look, boss. You gotta meet this other broad in the cocktail lounge; an' when you get a load of her, with dese an' dem an' dose, you won't look so sad about it."

"I don't meet ladies in cocktail bars," Halstead retorted with defiance. "I have enough trouble with 'em in my office. Who is this person you mention—"

"This baby in the bar downstairs? She's got to see you before you see the blimp—Big Bertha, the one Miss Burton's got parked."

"Don't tell me her name's Bertha." Halstead drew up his shoulders.

"No, it's Victoria somethin'. The one in the bar's name is Starford."

"Is that bird in the brown overcoat still across the street?"

"Yeah. I don't get it, boss. You want in—"

"I don't get it, either," Halstead returned glumly. "I suppose the lady in the bar'll be wearing a rose or something."

"Last booth on the left," Pinky said. "And—Miss Burton—she says make it snappy, on account of Big Bertha havin' to wait so long—"

**H**ALSTEAD pushed out to the street, tossed away his cigarette and told himself that he should have stayed in the camera-store.

He didn't look back. He reached the entrance to his building, passed through the revolving doors. A stairway led to



the cocktail lounge from one side of the lobby at the rear, behind the elevators. The lounge was done in red and black and chromium. Three men and a woman hung onto the bar with their heads close together. The bartender was polishing a glass, his back to the customers.

Halstead went to the last booth on the left and glanced quizzically at the vacant table. There was an ash-tray and a cocktail glass. He turned toward the bar as a black-coated waiter advanced. He indicated the booth with a nod.

"A young lady," Halstead said. "I was supposed to meet—"

"The young lady in the blue coat, with the red hair?" The waiter elevated thin brows. "She left not five minutes ago, with a gentleman, sir."

"With a gentleman?" Halstead swallowed. "But I—"

"She'd been waiting some time, sir. I was there to take the gentleman's order when he came in, but he didn't sit down. I heard him say that a Mr. Halstead had sent him. And the young lady—she seemed in a hurry to get out, sir. Of course, if you had an appointment, she may return presently."

Halstead jammed his hat on his head and went glumly to the stairs.

Halstead's suite had an entrance which let him from the hall into his private office. His fingers trembled a little as he stabbed at a button concealed under the top of his desk.

Miss Burton, taller than average, rounded where she ought to be rounded, and smartly turned out in a trim mulberry suit, entered.

She closed the door behind her, and advanced smartly. "You didn't tarry as long as I thought you might," she said quietly. "You look—"

"What's the gag?" Halstead demanded.

She held a light to his cigarette, and sparks dribbled down his coat lapel. "Gag?"

"This girl I'm supposed to meet in the cocktail bar." He exhaled twin col-

umns of smoke from his nostrils. "If I'm not totally nuts—"

"You didn't meet her?"

"No, I didn't meet her." He scowled at the cigarette. "Pinky didn't come back yet?"

"No."

"Look! Give me all the dope on this girl named Starford. Pinky tells me she's waiting in the lounge. The waiter tells me she just left with a guy who said Halstead sent him. Roll that over in your mind and give me the dope."

MARIE BURTON's eyes darkened. "The girl called on the telephone," she explained. She spoke hurriedly, and glanced at her wrist-watch. "It was at ten to two. She asked for you, and when I told her you probably wouldn't be back until three, I heard her catch her breath. I asked her if I could help her, or take a message. She hesitated, then asked who I was, and I told her."

"You told her you were a detective," Halstead accused.

"I told her I was your assistant, of course," Marie answered with a perky tilt of her head. "Then she told me a woman named Victoria Waldredge was on her way to our office. This girl said her name was Lucille Starford and that she was Miss Waldredge's niece, and that I was to get word to you that she positively had to see you before you talked to the Waldredge woman. I said that might be impossible. She said that she'd rush to our building and go down to the cocktail lounge and wait for you. She sounded so genuinely desperate, that I promised I'd do what I could. It was I who suggested that she go to the last booth on the left, and I got Pinky to watch for you when Victoria Waldredge showed up."

"And that's all you know?"

"Not all," Marie answered. "About five minutes before you called on the phone, I went down and took a gander, as Pinky would say, and saw—"



"Lucille Starford was in the booth then?"

"What a redhead! I was going to give you fifteen minutes with her, and then—"

"AM I to be kept waiting out here all day?"

The voice from the door came from the huge woman who filled it top and sides. It was an imperative voice.

Halstead didn't mean to gape. He wasn't perturbed a great deal by people. But he was stopped in his tracks here. The woman approached—and dwarfed everything in the room. She was a full six feet tall, and she must have weighed two hundred and fifty pounds. Her frame could take the weight. She wore a gray dress under a gray cloth coat, and an absurdly small hat. Her black hair was shot with streaks of white. She walked with an erect carriage, dominance in every gesture.

"Are you this man Halstead?" Her voice compelled attention.

Halstead indicated the massive guest-chair beside the desk. He said: "Sit down, Miss Waldredge. I was just—"

"Put that cigarette out, please!" She made a gesture with her long nose, a grimace of extreme distaste.

Halstead said; "Sorry." He crushed it and dropped wearily into his swivel-chair—moved the chased silver tray to one side, dropped a hand under his desk, flipped a switch over that made no noise. The motion made a microphone of the ornate desk-set nearest the guest-chair which would pick up every word that he or this strange caller uttered—words which would be recorded by Marie Burton at her desk outside, where she would be sitting with little earphones on, and wax records revolving on a machine.

"I'll come to the point at once, Mr. Halstead." The woman's voice was sharp, her lips thin under the dark suggestion of a mustache. "Tomorrow, out in Carverdale—you know where that is—there's to be a wedding at noon. In St. Thomas' Church."

She paused, and her eyes searched Halstead's lean sad face.

"My niece, Miss Lucille Starford, is to be the bride, and Thomas Canfield Gibson the groom. You, Mr. Halstead, will be a guest both at the house and at the church." She unclasped her enormous purse. Her lips shut as if she had said all that there was to say.

Halstead shook his head and raised his shoulders. "Somebody sent you to the

wrong place," he said wearily. "The Ajax Agency watches wedding presents and keeps an eye on the guests and—"

"Did I say anything about watching presents?" She stiffened.

"No, but—"

"I was given to understand that I was being sent to a thoroughly reliable and capable investigator." Her eyes seemed without pupils, black shoe-buttons.

"That's just it, Miss Waldredge. I'm an investigator. Not—"

"You will come to my house tonight—Waldredge Hall. You will arrive in Carverdale on the 9:17 train, and Mr. Gibson will meet you at the station. To the guests and to the members of the household, you will be an old friend of Mr. Gibson's. Not even my niece must know anything different."

Halstead screwed up his face in what was supposed to be a tolerant smile. He made a little gesture with his long hands. "You don't mind telling me, do you, just what I'm supposed to come for?"

"You will see that nothing—nothing at all—prevents that wedding!" Her hands came out of her purse, and she laid four crisp five-hundred-dollar notes on the broad desk.

HALSTEAD blinked at the currency, and raised his eyes. "What do you expect to happen?" He thought suddenly of the large gentleman in the brown overcoat who apparently had been quite interested in himself, and of Miss Lucille Starford, the bride-to-be, who had disappeared from the cocktail bar.

"Mr. Gibson will tell you what you need to know," the iron woman assured him. She looked through Halstead, rose suddenly. "You have your instructions."

"But that's not enough. I mean, you must have some idea that something's likely to happen, or—"

"I have no ideas about anything, Mr. Halstead. You're supposed to be a detective. One assumes you practice your profession. From what I've been told about you, you have had experience with danger—and with death."

"Then there's something about this wedding—"

"Good day, Mr. Halstead." She turned imperiously and went to the door that let directly into the hall. She didn't look back as she strode out and closed it behind her.

Halstead stared at the grotesque shadow that disappeared from the frosted

glass. His fingers combed his pockets for a cigarette. His mouth was a thin line down at the corners. Marie came in, and she wasn't even smiling. She held his chased silver cigarette-box up to him, took one herself.

"One thing the missing niece told me on the telephone," Marie said, "that I forgot to tell you. The aunt's queer."

"Nuts is the word," Halstead amended.

"Two grand!" Marie looked at the four bills on the desk. "Folding dough."

"You're getting to talk like the rest of the mugs in this business," Halstead protested.

She picked the money up and fingered it. Then she put it down again. "The niece wears a mink collar; the aunt carries heavy sugar. Looks like your birthday party for tonight is indefinitely postponed, Mr. Halstead." She dropped into a chair and crossed slender legs.

He glanced at her quickly, lifted his left brow. "I should've given the money back," he mumbled. "If I take this job on, I've got to go home and get out a monkey suit—"

"Your Sunday suit'll do. You're not an usher, nor the best man, nor anything like that. Just a—"

Pinky Wilson's entrance at that moment was arresting. The shabby little man with the watery eyes banged the door open, tripped on the edge of the rug, and advanced with a flushed face.

"**W**AIT'LL you get a load of this," Pinky gloated. "Just wait—"

"That's what I'm doing—waiting," Halstead answered patiently. "If you got a line on the big guy in the brown coat—"

"Not just one line," Pinky said. "A couple lines! Wait'll you hear." He rubbed his hands together gleefully, his pale eyes bright. "The big guy—his name's Jonas. I found that out when the little guy come across to the doorway an' called him that."

"What little guy?"

"Wait'll I tell you how it was. You tell me to get a line on the brown benny. Okay. I mosey across the street: The guy's in the doorway of the hat-cleanin' place, there in the fog. He keeps an eye on you when you leave the drug-store an' go to the buildin' entrance. I slip past him into the shop an' buy some shoe-laces.

"I stick around for a while; then this little guy in the black coat with a white muffler comes up to the big guy, looks

around on the street, and says: 'She's still up there, Jonas?' An' Jonas says: 'Yeah, an' she's liable to be there a lot longer. The undertaker just went up himself.' That's what Jonas says. Me, I don't get the crack about the undertaker, until the guy in the black coat says, 'Halstead just went up, eh?' Then I got it, an'—"

"You can save the laugh," Halstead mumbled. "It's not that funny." He'd heard himself referred to as a kind-looking mortician, before this.

"Well, that made me perk up an ear," Pinky rushed on. "The space in the ceilin' over where these birds stood was like a sound-chamber. They could whisper, an' still I could hear 'em. The little guy grins an' says: 'Halstead's probably too worried about the other frail by now to pay much attention to whatever Aunt Victoria's saying. Not that it matters.' The big guy said, 'Leave it to Eddie, about the dame!'—an' when the little guy said Eddie had the girl, I got uneasy. Then the little guy left."

"I tailed the little guy around the corner. He goes into a building—here's the address—an' I get in the elevator with him. He gets out on the third floor. He goes through a door, No. 343, that's standin' open. There's a girl at a desk in there, an' I hear him ask if anybody's called him, an' then he breezes into a private office. This is him." He handed a piece of paper to Halstead.

Marie Burton was at Halstead's side as he deciphered Pinky's scrawl.

"Theodore Wickland," Halstead read. He looked up at Pinky.

"I ask the elevator-starter," Pinky explained. "The business is attorney. Specializes in collections."

"Did the elevator-starter say anything else about him?"

"Only that he's a heel."

Halstead's frown was deep as he turned to his secretary. "Wrap the money up and send it to Miss Waldredge, registered," he said. "We'll have a birthday party. I don't want any of this mess."

**T**HE telephone rang. Marie lifted the receiver. "Arthur Halstead's office."

Halstead watched her, saw her eyes widen, saw a gleam that made him feel decidedly uncomfortable. Then into the transmitter she purred, "You say you're the— Just a moment; I'll let you talk to Mr. Halstead personally."

"Now what?" Halstead demanded as he took the receiver from her.



"Lots of fun," Marie answered impishly. "As Pinky would say, wait'll you get a load of this! First it's a redhead, then an Amazon, and now it's the maid in the ladies' room at one of the better joints."

Halstead addressed the instrument. And the voice that rattled against his ear was charged with excitement.

"I'm calling for Miss Lucille Starford," the voice said.

"Let me talk to her," said Halstead.

"You can't. She's in the ladies' room. She says she's going to stay there until you come after her personally. She asked me to call you and make sure I was talking to you, and then to tell you that she'd wait right here."

"Is anybody there with her?"

"A man at a table. He's waiting too. I don't like his looks, and Miss Starford says there's something queer—"

"Tell her I'll be right over." He hung up, and was conscious of Marie's smile.

"Do we still send back the money?" Marie asked.

"We keep it," he said. "You find out about train-time. And wait here for me."

"I'd rather go along, Mister."

"One woman at a time's enough."

## Chapter Two

GIFFORDS' was a dine-and-dance place by night, a secluded rendezvous at the cocktail hour. Halstead appeared mild and gentle and harmless in his long dark coat, but he had to speak sharply to the headwaiter before the maid finally was summoned.

"I recognize your voice from the telephone," the maid said. "I'll get Miss Starford. But you're too late to meet the man she ducked away from."

"I would be," Halstead groaned. He shot a glance over the room.

Miss Lucille Starford was more than Halstead expected. Just to say red hair and a mink collar on a blue coat, and all that, was well enough; but nobody could exactly describe her. She was almost as tall as Marie. She was the last word in smartness. She had a kind of translucent skin, and green-blue eyes, and a small spattering of freckles over the bridge of her nose, which tilted a little. She had a determined chin and a way of carrying herself that indicated independence.

Her eyes were frankly searching as she looked Halstead over. She said: "I'm sorry to be such a nuisance."

"Are you that much of a nuisance to your family too?" Halstead stretched his long neck out of his collar. "What happened to Eddie?"

"Oh! Then you did send him? You know who—"

"No, I didn't; and I don't know him. Let's sit down—my feet hurt."

"But—" Fear was behind her eyes.

THEY sat at a table by the wall.

"About this man who brought you here—" Halstead said.

"The maid said he paid his bill and left just about five minutes ago," Lucille Starford answered. "Please, Mr. Halstead, what's it all about?"

"That's what I want somebody to tell me. I can't find out anything. Why'd you call my office and ask me to meet you in the cocktail bar?"

"You've seen my aunt! She's been up to—" The girl's shoulders slumped.

"Yes. Suppose you let me ask the questions."

She sat back and folded her slender hands on the white cloth. The waiter came and they ordered.

"What'd you want with me in the cocktail bar?" Halstead screwed up his wide mouth and rubbed his long nose briskly.

"I—felt that I—I had to speak with you before my aunt—"

"Well, what about?"

"About her, about myself, about all the strange things that've been happening at Waldredge Hall." The words came tumbling breathlessly. "And most of all, I wanted to ask a promise from you."

"Promise?" He eyed her closely.

"I wanted you to promise me that you'd tell me the nature of my aunt's visit—especially if it concerned me, and if—" She broke off, her eyes pleading eloquently.

"This hoodlum who told you I sent him, over in the cocktail bar—" Halstead raised one brow. "What'd he look like?"

"He was tall—about your size. Rather handsome—dark. Soft-voiced—" She broke off with a queer catch in her breath. "I can't understand why—why anyone'd want to do that to me. I mean, come there while I was waiting for you—"

"What'd he say when he approached you?"

"He came directly to me, just as if you'd told him where I'd be sitting. He said: 'Miss Starford, I'm from the Halstead office. Come with me, please.' I'd

been waiting for a good half-hour, and I suppose I was pretty nervous and worked up and—well, it was a relief to move. I didn't suspect anything out of the way until we'd been here another half-hour, and he'd made at least three telephone-calls. He kept saying he was calling the office, and kept returning to report that you were still out, but you'd probably be along any moment. He kept asking a lot of questions about my home, and my aunts and—"

"Did he ask you what you wanted to see me about?"

"Yes, but I didn't tell him. I casually asked him if he'd been in your office yesterday when my aunt phoned for an appointment. When he said 'Yes,' I was panic-stricken—because my aunt never knew anybody by the name of Arthur Halstead existed—before ten o'clock this morning."

"How'd she find it out then?" Halstead leaned back when the waiter set the cocktails down. The girl waited until the man left before she answered.

She said: "I don't know. I overheard a telephone conversation—her side of it. I heard her say, 'Spell the name out,' and then she repeated it as she wrote it down. *Arthur Halstead*. I remembered it, because I'd read about a case you were in down the Eastern Shore last winter. My aunt asked whoever she was talking to if Arthur Halstead was reliable, and could be trusted. Then she said she wouldn't call for an appointment; she would go to Washington on the one o'clock train."

"So that frightened you," Halstead said, "and you decided to come in too. You're here with a bad case of jitters. You've got a lot of self-control, and you hold on well, but—what's scared you so? You mention strange things at Waldredge House. You live there?"

"Yes. I've lived there since I was a child."

"And you're the niece that's to be married to Thomas Canfield Gisbon."

"Then my aunt told you!" She was suddenly startled.

"Just that. Not much more."

"Please, Mr. Halstead. What else?"

"Should there be something else?"

"SHE didn't come here just for that!" the girl cried. Her small fists were clenched. "There's something wrong—terribly wrong—in that house if Aunt Vicky needs one of the most famous criminal investigators in the country. If it's because of Joel—"

"Who's Joel?" Halstead's countenance grew a little more soulful, which meant that he was becoming more interested.

"My brother."

"Joel doesn't care much about your marrying Mr. Gisbon?"

"I'm not influenced by my brother's likes and dislikes."

"Joel might do something to try and stop the wedding?"

"Why should he?" Her fingers spread apart on the cloth, trembling slightly.

"I don't know," Halstead answered.

"That's why I'm asking you."

"Joel wants me to be happy," she said fiercely. "It's true that of all the relatives, I'm the only one that—that understands him; and when I marry, he may feel that I'm farther away from him. But as for Joel not wanting me to marry—that's silly. Vicky hates him. I wouldn't put it past her to accuse him of—of anything. If she's told you that Joel—"

"She hasn't; she never mentioned him." Halstead shook his head sadly.

"Why do I get mixed up in things like this?" This last with great weariness.

"Let me have one of your cigarettes."

She held her case over, and Halstead took one, rolled it between his fingers.

LUCILLE STARFORD'S lips formed a word, hesitated. "Did she—did my aunt mention Bob Carsleigh?" She fairly blurred the question.

Halstead took one long drag on his cigarette, blew smoke at the uneven char on the under edge of the cigarette-paper.

"Look!" he said quietly. "You're trying desperately hard to find out something without telling me anything yourself. There's something worrying you plenty. Something that's happened—recently. You mention strange things in that house. Maybe if you'd lay it on the table, you'd feel better, and I'd know where I'm going. Maybe if you tell me about this fellow you've just mentioned,—Bob What's-his-name,—I could—"

There was sudden resolution and determination in the jut of her chin as she straightened in her chair. "It happened last night. That's—when I said good-by to Bob."

"You're marrying a man named Gisbon. Last night you said good-by to—"

"Please let me explain, Mr. Halstead. Yes, Bob Carsleigh is an old friend. Once we were very serious. But that passed a long time ago."

"You're about twenty-five now," Halstead said. "A long time ago to you might





be anywhere from a couple of months to a couple of years."

"Three years," she affirmed. "Before he went to the Virgin Islands. He's a young architect, and he was sent down there by the firm he worked for. He got into some sort of scrape, and got fired. Later he turned up in Florida. He worked here and there for several months, and finally in New Orleans he found a girl. It all happened very suddenly. He sent me some clippings from the papers about the elopement, told me that he knew he'd never be settled enough to make life worth while for me. I was—well, I was terribly shocked by the whole thing."

**H**ALSTEAD saw the light in her eyes change as if some mental cloud had shadowed them in passing.

"You'd been engaged to this Bob?" Halstead queried.

"Not formally. He'd proposed several times. But he was such a reckless, thoughtless, headstrong sort of kid. Gay and care-free and—"

"You loved him?"

"I suppose I did."

"You still do?"

"No!" She glanced up with widened eyes. Her reply was quick as if she'd anticipated the question and had the negative ready.

Halstead's eyes narrowed. He rubbed his nose again.

"What happened to Bob's marriage?"

"It lasted about six months. It must have been a mad whirl. The girl had money, something Bob didn't have. They went on a tour around the world. In Egypt, on a Nile boat, the girl gave herself up to the tropic night and a British captain, and the affair got out of hand in Cairo. Bob knocked the British captain down a flight of stairs in the hotel where they were stopping. There was a scene, and Bob took the next boat home."

"And the girl went to Reno," Halstead supplied.

"That's just it. She didn't. For a whole year Bob hadn't heard a word from her. Then a month ago she showed up."

"Where?"

"Here. In Washington. She went up to the country, to see Bob."

"Bob lives near Waldredge Hall?" Halstead scratched his smooth chin.

"On the adjoining estate—or what was an estate, once—"

"What'd Bob do?"

"He moved out when she moved in. Came down here to a hotel."

"What happened last night?" Halstead began to fidget in his chair.

"Bob called me early in the afternoon—on the telephone. He said he simply had to see me, in town; he sounded so genuinely desperate, that I told him I'd come in on the train. He met me at the station, and we had dinner at the Willard. He wanted to go some place to dance, so we went to a roadhouse. Only we didn't dance."

"What'd you do instead?"

"I spent a perfectly miserable evening trying to convince Bob that he was crazy. He insisted that we only had one life to live, and it was time right then to start living it. He insisted that I go away with him at once. He'd been drinking, so I had my hands full. Finally I told him I simply had to get a train and get home. He said he would drive me up."

"We got in his car, but I took the wheel. We reached Waldredge Hall about eleven-thirty. We drove up to the carriage porch on the side and sat in the car a few minutes. Bob was rather morose by that time. I got out and went up to the porch, and Bob took my arm and went with me. I held out my hand to say good-night to him, but instead of a friendly shake, he grabbed me and kissed me."

The fear was back in her eyes again, and a flush tinged the pallor of her skin.

"Was that all?" Halstead reached into her case for another cigarette.

"If it only had been!" She drew up her small shoulders. "No, that wasn't all. While Bob held me, the porch-light was snapped on. Aunt Vicky was standing in the door. She'd probably been standing there since the car drove up. There was an ugly scene then. She has a vicious temper. All her life she's ordered the lives of other people—"

"Including yours?"

"Not exactly. She'd always hated Bob, though, always feared that I might marry him."

"She ordered him off last night?"

"She told him to get out. She almost tore my arm off jerking me through the door and into the house. Bob said a few things to her before he drove off. Then she said a few ugly things to me, and I went to my room and locked myself in."

"And had a good cry," Halstead said.

"I was too furious to cry. Nor could I go to sleep. Aunt Alberta—she's the youngest of my three spinster aunts—came into my room and sat on the edge of my bed for a long time. She didn't say much—just sat there and ran her fingers through my hair. After a little she began to cry, and I tried to get her to tell me what ailed her. Finally she leaned down and kissed me and went out."

"You say Alberta's the youngest. How old is she?"

"Fifty-five. She's small, and must have been very pretty when she was younger. Drusilla comes between Alberta and Aunt Vicky."

"She lives at Waldredge Hall too?"

"Yes. She's the queerest of them all. She's almost as tall as Aunt Vicky, but she's thin and stooped and—sullen."

"You said something strange happened last night, but I don't see anything strange about your Aunt Victoria being a little upset over that scene with Bob. After all—"

"The strange thing happened later." The fear in her eyes was more pronounced. "Around two o'clock in the morning."

"What was it?"

"Maybe I'm just letting my nerves get away with me," Lucille Starford answered soberly. "I'd been lying there awake for a long time, thinking of Bob, thinking of—well, everything. Once I thought I heard a door shut out in the passage, and once I thought I heard somebody talking down in the drive under my window."

"Finally I got up to get a cigarette, and found I'd left my purse with my cigarettes in it, down on the table in the side hall. My room's at the end of the west-wing passage on the second floor. I got my robe and went out in the hall. I'd just got to the turn into the main hall when I saw a tiny light flash along the carpet."

"I don't know why I was so terrified at the time. Somebody was coming along the hall on tiptoe, stealthily. I stepped back against the wall in the side passage, and somebody passed me in the dark. I waited there a moment. Then the light appeared again, and whoever carried it was opening the door to the attic. In the circle of light I saw the blade of an ax."

**C**RUSHING out his cigarette, Halstead toward her. "Somebody carrying an ax. Two in the morning. Tiptoe." He shook his head. "Carried it to the attic. Could you tell who it was?"

"No. The figure was indistinct, silhouetted by that small light. It might have been Alberta, or Drusilla. It might have been Joel, or—or almost anybody else but Adam."

"Who's Adam?" Halstead was alert now, his sad eyes moist.

"The butler, gardener, chauffeur—the handy man about the place. He's been there for almost fifty years, I think."

"How'd you know it wasn't Adam?"

"Because Adam came creeping along the hall a moment later and went to the attic door and looked up."

"Could you see him? You said it was inky black—"

"Adam walks with a limp," Lucille Starford said. "Sort of drags his left foot. You could distinguish that sound on the carpet."

"Did he wait at the foot of the attic stairs?"

"I don't know. I didn't stay. I got back into my room and locked the door. I did without my cigarette."

**F**OR a long moment Halstead was silent. A group of people, chatting gayly, came in and took the table near by. He looked at them with annoyance.

"This man you're to marry—Gisbon," Halstead said finally. "You've told him about this—about Bob?"

"I haven't seen him since luncheon yesterday."

"What's his business?"

"He's a junior partner with Brownfield & Co., the stockbrokers. He runs the firm's Washington offices. He has a country place near Carverdale—in fact, he was born and reared there. His family is a very old one in that community."

"And you're in love with him?"

"I wouldn't marry for money, Mr. Halstead."

He watched her eyes closely. He couldn't tell anything about what was going on inside her at the mention of Thomas Canfield Gisbon's name.

"You've known him all your life too?"

"Yes."

"You say he's somewhat older than you. How much older?"

"He's thirty-nine—I'm twenty-six."

"Thirteen years," Halstead muttered. "Your Aunt Victoria approves of him."

"She's very fond of him."

Halstead pushed his chair back from the table. The girl glanced at him with her question in her eyes. "You haven't told me what Aunt Vicky wanted of you, Mr. Halstead. You—"



"She hired me to see that nothing happened to prevent your wedding," Halstead answered simply.

"But what can happen?" There was stark terror in her eyes.

"That's what I want to know," Halstead answered. He got to his feet, held her coat for her. "Tonight I go to your house—as a guest. Old friend of Gisbon's. He's to meet me at the train. He's to tell me something, too. Outside of Gisbon and your Aunt Victoria, nobody knows who I am. As far as you and I are concerned—we're perfect strangers."

"Perfect strangers," Lucille Starford repeated.

Halstead halted near the door. "Just one more thing: Does the name Theodore Wickland mean anything to you?"

"Is it supposed to?" she asked. "It doesn't register. Who—"

"Never mind." He held the heavy curtain aside for her to pass. "Could I see you to your car, Miss Starford?"

"I'll go over in a cab. Many thanks." She climbed into a taxicab and was gone.

MARIE BURTON turned from the window as Halstead entered his private office, her eyes expectant.

Halstead looked desolate and forlorn in his long coat. He slumped disconsolately into his swivel-chair.

She said: "I've been waiting for the phone to ring, for the police to call and have me come for you because you'd taken Eddie apart."

He glared up at her; then he shrugged. "No such luck. He was gone when I got there."

"But the girl," Marie said. "You rescued her?"

Halstead ignored this. "How about my train? What time—"

"We're driving up to Waldredge Hall." Marie perched herself on a corner of his desk. She swung one trim leg rhythmically.

"We!" He screwed up his long face and frowned.

"It's your birthday, remember? We were going to have a party. Since we've got a case instead, we'll have a quiet dinner. I have a present for you. The trip in my car'll be more restful—"

"In this fog?"

"The fog's not too bad."

"But—but Gisbon," Halstead objected. "He'll be at the train—"

"I wired him not to bother. I'll call the garage and get the car brought around. I—"

"How'd you know where to wire him?" Halstead got up uncertainly.

"I called his office. They told me he would be at Waldredge Hall."

"Then you know who he is!"

"Don't I always read the society columns?" She reached for the telephone.

### Chapter Three

UNDER the long hood of the coupé, the motor purred; but the wheels barely turned. Mr. Arthur Halstead sat hunched forward, tense, watching the speedometer with one eye and what could be seen of the road's shoulder with the other.

"The fog wouldn't be too bad!" he muttered. The tone was supposed to convey utter sarcasm. "Much more of this, and we'll be in the ditch for the rest of the night." He had a death-grip on the door-handle.

"The men that gave us the directions said we couldn't get stuck in the mud as long as we followed the tracks after we turned into the woods." Marie's voice held a note of gayety.

"I don't know why the hell things like this have to come to me," Halstead mused. "—Look out for that ditch!"

"I'm missing the ditch by a foot. And don't shout at me."

Halstead held his breath as the wheels settled into the water-filled ruts. Marie eased into second gear and crept along. The water smeared the windshield, but the wiper blades cleared twin arcs in the glass.

"Anybody who'd live back on a road like this would have to be queer," Halstead said.

"You didn't say much about the nice birthday present I gave you," Marie said.

"I mightn't ever live to see it," he answered wearily.

They came to a fork in the road suddenly. They had to take the left jog, because a log had fallen across the tracks that led to the right.

"Hey! That's a car coming!" Halstead's stare was fixed on the growing yellow in the fog.

"It's gone!" Marie darted a glance at him. "Maybe we're seeing things."

Halstead shuddered to think what would happen if they met a car on this stretch. Hardly room enough for one to navigate between the bush-grown sides!

All at once the coupé was on higher ground with more solid footing. Marie

eased into high. The motor purred softly.

"It was a car!" Her voice was tense. She turned to Halstead fully.

Halstead said: "I guess it turned out to let us by." He'd caught the momentary glint of Marie's lights in sleek metal, heard the hum of a motor through his open window. It had pulled out to the left instead of to the right.

"Dangerous trick, without his lights on," Halstead grumbled. He could hear the roar of the motor behind him now.

"Whoever it is, is getting out of here in a hurry," Marie answered.

"Stone gateposts," Halstead recalled. "They'll be on your side; and we can't come to 'em too soon to suit me."

They found the gate and turned in. She peered ahead for lights in the milky shroud. They were on a well-graveled lane. It dipped sharply and curved around a high bank. They rolled with a rattle of boards over a small wooden bridge with rustic railing. The drive ascended. The smell of wet earth and the stark wet trees came into the car on the heavy air.

**S**UDDENLY the house appeared. It was hard to judge distance by the oblong blurs of light that marked the lower-floor windows. The drive took them under the roof of the carriage-porch. Marie stopped, turned the ignition-key, sighed.

Halstead said: "Now you get all this long trip back, with the fog and—"

A light on the porch came on, dim and ghostly, and a man came out of the house, his furrowed face drawn in his effort to peer past the light into the fog. Halstead got out, walked around the car.

"Oh, I thought it was Mr. Gisbon," the man blinked. "Miss Victoria told me—"

"I'm Mr. Gisbon's friend," Halstead said. "I'm expected; if you'll tell him—"

"You—you're not Mr. Halstead, are you?" The man seemed suddenly alert.

"Yes."

"But—but—" The man was all at once disconcerted. "Come in, please."

Halstead followed him up the steps and into a high-ceiled room that had about it the air of a place never used. The woodwork was a faded white, and the doors were massive with small panels. Involuntarily Halstead shuddered.

He got a good look at the man too, tall, thin and bald, with a tuft of gray hair on either side of a bald spot. He had enormous hands, gnarled from hard

work, but scrupulously scrubbed. He wore dark trousers and a white coat, and the effect was that of a field-hand who had been called in to serve as a butler.

The man shut the hall door and left Halstead standing there. He glanced about him. There was a large fireplace with a screen, and brass tools in a rack at one side. The carpet was thin and worn, very old—a sort of paisley design in yellow against faded red. There was a stiff Victorian couch with a high medallion back, an octagonal table against the wall, Victorian chairs neatly and precisely placed, a stuffed parrot under a glass cover on a table in one corner. The parrot's eyes were bright and impudent.

Halstead had heard no sound, but suddenly he turned on his heel, a little startled. A door had opened in the wall behind him, and Victoria Waldredge stood there, specter-like, shapeless in her slate-gray gown with darker gray shadows behind her.

"May I ask the meaning of this, Mr. Halstead?" she demanded. Her eyes were unblinking, black and staring without definite focus.

"Of what?" Halstead stiffened.

"You were to come with Mr. Gisbon. Surely you couldn't have missed him."

"Didn't he get my telegram?" Halstead queried.

"What telegram?" The thin mouth with the hint of mustache around it moved. All else about the mountainous woman seemed rigid and watchful.

"I wired Gisbon I'd drive through," Halstead said. "And come here direct."

"Mr. Gisbon got no wire," Victoria Waldredge retorted. "He went to meet the 9:17 train at Carverdale. I don't understand—"

**T**HERE was nothing human about the scream—nothing recognizable, nothing exactly like anything else Halstead had ever heard. The first sound came from a distance, and halted the woman's speech. Then it was repeated from somewhere surprisingly close, and it sent gooseflesh over Halstead's arms and legs and up the back of his neck.

Miss Waldredge went to the hall door with surprising agility. From somewhere in the gloomy cavern beyond, another sound came breathlessly.

A woman, plaintively: "Vicky, Vicky, it's—"

"What's wrong with that cat?" Victoria demanded. She moved ponderous-



ly into the hall; Halstead followed her. He saw a small woman with a pointed face that was dominated by a long, pointed nose. She had a scared, pinched look.

"Blood," the pinched-looking woman said, hushed and breathless. "He's been fighting. He's—hurt. He's—"

"Nonsense!" Victoria went toward the turn in the passage. The small woman trotted behind her. They seemed to have forgotten Halstead. He could hear the cries of the animal—low, blood-chilling.

"Poor, poor Darius!" the small woman muttered plaintively. "If he's hurt—"

VICTORIA towered over the cat; it arched its back and raised a paw at her approach. The dim light above the stairwell glistened in the blood on the cat's foot. There was blood on the mouth, gleaming against the tawny hair. Green eyes glowed madly. From somewhere behind Halstead, the thin, furrow-faced man appeared and spoke in a hushed voice.

"I'll get him, miss," the man said.

He reached for the cat, and the cat screamed. The small woman cried audibly. Somewhere above them a door opened and closed, then another. Halstead heard people moving about on soft carpet.

"Don't let him scratch you, Adam," Victoria said.

The man called Adam jerked back his arm as the cat's claws ripped into his sleeve; then he made a lunge and caught the animal by the back of the neck.

"Poor, poor thing!" the small woman cried through her tears. "Something's tried to kill Darius. I know—"

"Nice kitty!" Adam said under his breath. He was holding the yowling cat up to get a better look at him. Then Halstead saw him straighten suddenly.

His eyes were round and staring when he turned to Victoria. "It—it aint the cat, Miss Victoria," Adam said. "He aint hurt. It's—blood—on all four of his feet. He's been into—blood—"

"He must have killed some game," Miss Victoria said with a tone of dismissal. She turned and caught sight of Halstead standing there.

But Halstead didn't see her. He was shoulder to shoulder with Adam, looking at the cat. Gingerly he put out his hand, touched the cat's clawing paw, looked at the cold sticky substance.

Halstead said: "Miss Waldredge, this cat hasn't killed anything. This blood—it's getting ready to congeal. I think

maybe we'd better take a look. My guess is that the cat stumbled onto something that frightened him, sent him into a mad fit, almost."

"What nonsense, Mr. Halstead—"

"Which way'd that cat come from?" Halstead demanded. He spoke now to the small woman. He was conscious of people at the head of the stairs, standing very still and alert.

"Through the back hall," the small woman answered.

Halstead turned to Adam. "Have you got a light? A torch?"

"Yes sir, I'll fetch it."

"Mr. Halstead, this is absurd," Victoria Waldredge said. "I think we'd better return to our—"

"Here it is," Adam handed Halstead the small cylinder he had taken from a shelf in the stair closet. Halstead's arms tensed. It was a small beam, that Lucille Starford had seen on the blade of the ax, the night before!

Halstead followed the cat's tracks on the light carpet through the open butler's pantry and across the spotless kitchen linoleum. The door that led to the back porch stood slightly ajar. Halstead pushed it wider and saw the tracks on the porch. Here he lost them. The cat had jumped onto the porch from the flagstone walk.

Miss Victoria said: "Undoubtedly a rabbit. Darius always catches them. I'm chilled, Mr. Halstead."

"When cats catch rabbits," Halstead answered, "they eat them. All but the fur. They don't walk around in—" He choked off the sentence. His torch beam was pointing into the mist, a round flaring bull's-eye that diffused itself like light on a ground-glass screen. In the very edge of the flare he made out something white against the wet black stones.

HE halted, turned to Miss Victoria, who was immediately behind him. The small woman hadn't followed them. Adam loomed behind Victoria with his long thin neck with its large Adam's apple, and his staring round eyes.

Halstead held his light on the thing that had caught his eye. They were nearer now and the object had taken form. It was a human hand.

Victoria Waldredge said, without emotion: "Somebody's hurt."

Halstead came up to the hand and saw that it was on the end of an arm that projected from the door of the shed. He flashed the light along the arm to the

face—held it there, waited for the woman's next words.

But it was Adam who spoke—a loud terrified cry.

"It's—oh, God, it's Mr. Gisbon!" Adam's breath was suddenly very short and loud, a kind of wheezing through his throat.

Halstead whirled and put his light in Victoria Waldredge's face. She said: "Do you have to blind me?"

"This—this—"

"Is he dead?" the woman demanded.

"Nobody could lose all that blood and live," Halstead answered.

THOMAS CANFIELD GIBSON lay in a sprawling position on the shed floor. His hat, dotted with drying water-spots, lay against the door. A pool of blood spread over the concrete floor away from the forehead. He had fallen close to the door, so that one arm stuck out. The other arm was folded under him, and the middle of his forehead was caved in where something had hit him a devastating blow.

Halstead felt the pale face, the white fingers. The face was sharply cut, the chin strong and grimly unyielding even in death. He bent the arm and brought the hand inside the shed. Then he straightened, cast a hurried glance about the structure's interior, saw that it was used mostly for garden tools, with a work-bench along one wall.

"We can't leave him here," Miss Waldredge said.

"We've got to leave him here," Halstead answered. "This is where he stays until the Sheriff comes. If there's a padlock—"

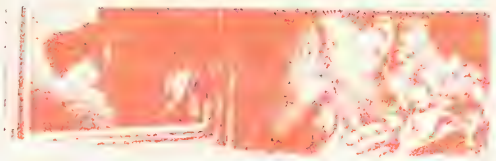
"There's one in the door-hasp."

He swung the door shut and fastened the lock. When he turned the light back to the walk, he saw that Adam had gone.

"We won't alarm any of the guests until we have to," Victoria Waldredge said. "There's a telephone in the kitchen. Use that for the Sheriff. If we could wait until morning—"

"That won't do any good," Halstead said. "Gisbon's dead, and he didn't kill himself. He didn't fall, either. He's been dead an hour or more. I'll get the Sheriff on the phone. Then you'll have to tell me what Gisbon had intended to tell me."

She showed him the telephone in the deserted kitchen, then went through the pantry doorway. Halstead had to crank the phone to get the operator.



He learned that the Sheriff's name was Lucas—Elam Lucas; and he had to wait a good five minutes before the operator told him to go ahead.

Elam Lucas had a very thin voice, but a businesslike one, and said he would be out as soon as he could get some deputies organized.

"You won't need any posse," Halstead insisted. "Get the coroner—"

Elam Lucas hung up, and Halstead glared at the phone.

He got into the wrong passage on leaving the kitchen, and it wasn't until Adam found him that he got straightened out.

Adam said, "This way, Mr. Halstead," and clumped wearily ahead of him.

Suddenly Halstead remembered Marie and the car, and his things. He said: "My bags. I've got to get—"

"I've taken Mrs. Halstead and your bags up to your room," Adam said.

"You've *what*?" Halstead swallowed, and his long face screwed up in pain.

"Mrs. Halstead," Adam repeated. "I've showed her your room. She said to send you up as soon as I could."

Halstead felt faint. He stared at the gaunt butler. He wanted all at once to sit down. Miss Victoria Waldredge was waiting ahead of him in the doorway to the side parlor.

#### Chapter Four

MISS WALDREDGE stood aside for Halstead to pass her, then shut the door. Her face was without expression, her eyes black disks without pupils. He wanted to get upstairs to his secretary and find out just what that most disconcerting young female had in mind. He reflected that he ought to fire her right now—on the spot!

Victoria Waldredge's voice said: "He must've known pretty definitely that it was coming."

"How'd he know it, Miss Waldredge?" Halstead demanded. "What did he want to tell me at the train—that is, if—"

"That died with him," Victoria muttered. "He didn't tell me; but it must've been something damning to someone."



"Who gave you my name?" Halstead asked abruptly. "Who'd you ask about a detective—"

"Thomas—Mr. Gisbon. I didn't ask him. He called me at ten o'clock from Washington. He told me to go to your office."

"Why didn't he come to see me himself?"

"I asked him that same question," Victoria Waldredge replied. "He said he couldn't explain at the moment, not on the telephone."

Halstead rubbed his long nose briskly. "He told you to retain me to see that nothing got in the way of his wedding?"

"Not in those words."

"In what words?"

"He said: 'This isn't anything to be alarmed about.' He said: 'I've just come onto something that concerns my happiness and Lucy's. Maybe I can tell you all about it later.'"

"You remember that hint in my office—what you said about danger and death? Why'd you say that?"

"I had a strange intuition about—about my nephew—Joel." The black eyes never moved in their small sockets. "He'd want to stop the wedding that bad?"

"I don't know. He might."

"Why?"

"He hated Thomas Gisbon—desperately." There was hate in her face now—hate for this man she spoke of.

"Why should he hate Gisbon so?"

"It goes back several years. Something about the stock-and-bond business. They were in something together, and Joel made a mistake in judgment. He lost most of his inheritance from his grandfather, and accused Thomas of being responsible."

**H**ALSTEAD watched her face. "You think Joel killed Gisbon?"

"I've quit thinking."

"Where is he now—Joel?"

"He should be in the house. He's been here for a week. Why he had to come back now I don't know unless—yes, unless Robert Carsleigh sent for him." She raised her eyes suddenly. "You don't know Robert Carsleigh?"

Halstead's pulses quickened. His face told her nothing.

"No," he said.

The lids dropped over the blank eyes. "That's something else to think about."

"Who is he?" Halstead was conscious of someone passing the door outside,

the old boards creaking under the weight of heavy feet.

The woman listened alertly before she replied: "He's my niece's—" She broke off and moved soundlessly across the worn paisley carpeting to the door and opened it suddenly. The dim passage was empty.

**Y**OU started to tell me about Carsleigh," Halstead prompted.

"Last night he insisted that my niece elope with him before—before—"

"Before what?"

"His own words were: 'Before it's too late.'"

"I don't get it," Halstead mumbled. He glanced at the closed door. "This Carsleigh—he didn't want her to marry Gisbon, either."

"He chased after Lucy for years."

"So he might want to stop the wedding, too."

"Yes."

"You overheard something between Carsleigh and your niece last night."

"On the side porch. They'd been out together. Lucy hadn't seen him for a couple of years or more, to my knowledge. But somehow they'd got together yesterday. He brought her home late. Under the shadow of the porch they—well, I must say it was revolting."

"What was?"

"The display of—passion."

Halstead shook his head slowly. "In other words, Miss Waldredge," he said, after a contemplative pause, "your niece, Lucille Starford, and this Carsleigh were, and still are, in love. They tried to say good-by last night and—couldn't. At least Carsleigh wanted her to change her mind about Gisbon. She wouldn't. Tonight Gisbon died. Any idea where Carsleigh is right now?"

"No."

"Or your niece?"

"She should be in her room or in the library."

"After this scene you witnessed last night, you and your niece had a quarrel?"

"I told my niece what I thought of such—such contemptible conduct."

"Let's get back to Gisbon," Halstead said quietly. "You say he got no telegram at about six, from my office."

"I'm positive. At six o'clock tonight I was talking with Mr. Gisbon in the library. I was with him until Adam called us in to dinner at six-thirty."

"And he wasn't called away from the table to answer the phone."

"He wasn't."

"What'd he do between dinner and time to leave for the train?"

"He and Mr. Grinsby and a few of the other men were in the library."

"Who's Mr. Grinsby?"

"Willis Grinsby," Victoria answered. Her tone carried the implication that she had said enough. "He's been associated with Mr. Gisbon for years in the brokerage business."

"What other men were there?"

"George Mordell, John Goldrick, Oliver Grayne and Joel. Mr. Mordell is an attorney from Baltimore, a fraternity brother of Mr. Gisbon's. John Goldrick is a neighbor, a hunting companion of Mr. Gisbon; Mr. Grayne is my cousin."

"All house-guests?"

"Mr. Mordell and Mr. Grinsby are."

"They were all in the smoking-room until about when?"

"Mr. Gisbon told me at a quarter to nine that he was starting a little early to meet the train, because of the fog."

"He seemed all right then?"

"He seemed his normal self. He wasn't an effusive type. He kept his feelings pretty well to himself."

"Goldrick and Oliver Grayne left ahead of Gisbon?"

SHE nodded.

"They left about eight-thirty. Oliver's place is right back of this one. There's a footpath that connects them. Oliver was walking, and Mr. Goldrick was driving. His place is about a half-mile down on the way to Carverdale."

"That left Mordell and Grinsby in the house, along with Joel and your niece and whoever else lives here."

"Yes."

"Gisbon went out to get his car about a quarter to nine. You didn't hear his car drive away, I suppose?"

"I didn't. I was in my sitting-room."

"By yourself?"

"Yes. I'd had a busy hour with the dressmaker, Miss Prior. She came to give Lucy her final fitting. That was right after dinner. She'd gone just before Mr. Gisbon came to tell me he was leaving."

"Where was Lucy then?"

"She'd just told me she was going to her room to take a shower."

"Miss Waldredge, Mr. Gisbon asked you to bring two thousand dollars to my office to hire me to see that nothing happened to prevent his wedding. Well, I didn't get here in time. I guess that the best thing for me is to go on back to-night. I'll mail you the money—"

"You'll stay right here!" There was stern emphasis in her voice.

"But, Miss Waldredge—"

"Mr. Gisbon gave me to understand that you ranked among the top. He retained you. You'll stay. Somebody will have to handle the Sheriff and all these people that'll come in here to trample over everything. Personally, I want nothing to do with Elam Lucas. You'll represent me. Do you understand?"

"My being here won't help you with the Sheriff. You'll talk to Lucas. He'll want to ask the questions. It's his job to make inquiries—"

"Do I have to answer them?"

"Well, you're supposed to help justice, and not obstruct the law any."

"Help justice!" There was a snort in the way she said it.

"Sometimes when you tell a Sheriff too much, it doesn't help anything. For instance, about Joel and Carsleigh not liking Gisbon very well. Right away the Sheriff'd slap them in the can—"

"Do you think I'm a fool? The less publicity I or my family can have on this—"

"If Mr. Gisbon had any enemies," Halstead said impressively, "you didn't know about it. . . . Everybody loved dear Tom. Call Goldrick and your cousin, Oliver Grayne. Get 'em over here and break the news to 'em. Get everybody in the house down in the living-room or the library—where I can talk to 'em."

"And you're still a wedding guest, Mr. Halstead. You came on an invitation."

"Absolutely."

Victoria Waldredge seemed heavy and tired on her thick legs. Then she straightened resolutely.

"I want to see Adam, too. Right away." Halstead followed her into the passage.

ADAM took Halstead upstairs. Halstead took in the floor plan. The house was T-shaped, the wings—the cross of the stem—facing south, and running east and west. It was into the west wing that Adam led him. He paused before white panels. His knock brought Marie.

"Mr. Halstead, madam." The gaunt man stepped aside.

Halstead stood just inside the door, stared, his ears alert for sounds on the carpet outside.

Marie said: "Don't look so beaten about it. Wait'll I tell you—"

"You told me enough," Halstead answered grimly. "You tricked me into letting you drive me here. Then the



minute my back's turned, you take advantage of it and—and tell that servant you—you're—"

"I only did it because I felt I had to do my duty."

"Your duty! You didn't want anything going on without being on hand." Halstead sighed wearily. "You fixed it. You fixed it swell! How'm I gonna explain you to that big woman? She saw you as a stenographer in my office."

"You don't have to explain me."

"I suppose you've done that yourself."

"No, but I will."

"You'll get your coat on and go down and get in your car and go to Carverdale. I'm in a big enough mess now without you—"

"Not as big a one as you'll be in if I walk out on you."

Halstead stared at her, speechless. Then over her shoulder he saw that the big double bed had been turned down, and his gayly striped orange and black pajamas—the pair with the Russian blouse—had been laid out. And on the small bench near the foot of the bed was a traveling-case and some sort of pink-satinish garment hung shamelessly out of it.

He tried to swallow, couldn't. Her eyes laughed at him.

"It's all right, Arthur dear. I've got your bed all ready for you when you're ready for it. But if I don't miss my guess, you've got a couple of hours of right strenuous work ahead of you."

Halstead looked at her intently. "You know—what happened?"

"About Thomas Canfield Gisbon, you mean? Certainly I know."

**H**ALSTEAD sighed. "How in the name of—"

"I saw the body—"

"Wait a minute!" Halstead held up a weary hand. He walked into the middle of the room. Marie followed him.

"Let me have your coat, and I'll tell you."

"Maybe I shouldn't listen," he said gloomily. "Every time I let you speak, I get into things deeper. My God! We arrive here about ten o'clock. I get into the house. Three minutes after I'm in, I hear a scream. Then I find the body of the guy that retained me to see that nothing would stop his wedding. Cold! Five—six minutes after I got here. Then I find my secretary's passed herself off as my wife, and now I find she knew there was a body almost as soon as I found it."

112

"You're wrong there, dear Arthur," she purred. "I knew it *before* you did!"

Halstead dropped into a chair. "Maybe you know who killed him, and how he was killed. Maybe you wouldn't mind telling me just in case—"

"I'll tell you what I know, and maybe you can use the pieces in the main puzzle. And maybe I can find more for you to play with."

"Please don't try," Halstead pleaded. "After this sock in the pan—"

"I'll say this, dear Arthur—"

"Don't call me 'dear Arthur!'"

"How would it sound for a bride to address her darling as Mr. Halstead?"

"You're not a bride."

"But we've got to pretend—"

"You started to tell me something."

"I started to tell you that if I hadn't seen what I did, I wouldn't be in this room, and Mr. Arthur Halstead wouldn't, have an inside track to the murder."

"Well, tell me."

**M**ARIE lit a cigarette for herself, inhaled luxuriously.

"We'd no more than stopped out there under the carriage-porch," she started, "when this man Adam appeared in the doorway, just as if he'd been watching for a car to arrive. You told him who you were, and he seemed all upset. He asked you to come in right away. He turned off the porch light, but left one on in the hall. That door has two side lights, long narrow windows with thin curtains behind them."

"Yes, I saw those."

"I sat back in the car and was reaching for a cigarette when I heard someone running. The sound was coming from behind me. I glanced out. The runner almost crashed into the back of the car; then I saw the shape against the door's side-lights. It was a girl. For just a flash I caught the silhouette, and if it wasn't your redheaded young friend of the ladies' room, then I'm all cockeyed."

"She went in that porch door?"

"She started to, then ducked into the shadow again and went round front. I just started to settle back and light my cigarette, when I heard almost a duplicate of the sound. Whoever it was saw the car, and slowed. I slid down in the seat, but I saw the blur of the figure and the thing it carried."

"What thing?"

"For only a hundredth of a second, dear Arthur, there was an outline of an ax against the light—the blade of an ax."

"You're sure?" He got up and sat down again.

"I'm sure. The figure carried it so it was hugged against the body."

"Man or woman?"

"That's what I couldn't make out," Marie answered. She reached over and mashed her cigarette in a tray. "I thought it was all very strange. The person that carried the ax looked into the side-light apparently to make sure the passage was clear, then opened the door a mere crack, just enough to slide in."

"What'd you do?"

"I got out. I heard a muffled scream. I went toward the rear of the house. This all happened, mind you, within the space of not more than two or three minutes. I was under an arbor, just about to turn and go back, when I heard voices and saw a light, and a human hand on the ground near an open door. I jumped back into the shadows, and you and that woman, and Adam, came up. You put your light on the body, but I saw the hand before you did. Right then and there I decided, Arthur, that you needed a woman's capable hand."

"You mean you decided it wouldn't be a complete bust unless you helped make it that way," Halstead groaned.

"I saw Adam leave you, and head for the house in a hurry. In fact, he looked as if he was sneaking away. I got around to that side porch as fast as possible and rang the bell. Adam opened the door. He was all out of breath. I told him that I was Mrs. Halstead and had quite been forgotten."

Halstead got to his feet dejectedly. He went over to the chaise-longue by the dressing-table. He sprawled in it and felt of its possibilities as a couch for his weary head.

"It won't be that bad," Marie laughed. She got up and came over to him and took his arm. "Very thoughtful of Adam, or Miss Victoria, or whoever provided for us. Come and look."

UNDER her urging he followed. She opened a door in the rear wall. She snapped a switch, and two warm lamps glowed in a little sitting-room. Under the windows there was a couch with bed-covers turned back. Her slippers and robe were on the floor by the bed.

"You see how considerate I am?" she inquired with raised brows.

Halstead grinned.

"I've got one more piece of information," Marie said. "I hope it pleases you."

"After what's just happened, I can stand anything."

"All right. The redhead's room is just across the corridor and down toward the west end. Remember, dear Arthur, I don't like redheads."

Halstead went to answer the knock that brought both Marie and himself from the small sitting-room.

Adam stood in the dim passage. He said: "Miss Victoria's got everybody downstairs now, Mr. Halstead, except Mr. Joel. He's not in his room."

"Where is he?" Halstead demanded.

"Nobody seems to know, sir."

"I'll be right down, Adam."

## Chapter Five

THE living-room at Waldredge Hall was Queen Anne in style. Near a huge fireplace the members of a group either sat or stood as Halstead entered.

A short man sat on the arm of a large and long divan, patting the shoulder of Miss Lucille Starford. He was saying: "Tragic, Lucy. Can't tell how I feel. Shameful of them to have you face this."

Victoria Waldredge said: "Will you quit that moaning, Oliver? Lucy doesn't seem to be breaking her heart."

"Why should she?" a tall stooped woman said sullenly, and Halstead knew that this drab female was Drusilla.

Victoria introduced Halstead, and he began the tedious job of mental cataloguing. First there was Oliver Grayne on the arm of the divan, thin and spidery with quick, nervous movements and a thin nervous mouth. The small woman with the long nose and long pointed face—Alberta—called him Cousin Oliver. Halstead gave no sign that he'd ever seen Lucy Starford before. Drusilla regarded him with hostile eyes. John Goldrick and Willis Grinsby stood together at one end of the mantel. They were both of medium height except that Goldrick was red and stocky and blunt. Grinsby was trim and dapper, flawlessly tailored. George Mordell, the Baltimore attorney, a big-bodied and untidy man of forty, had a large head, almost completely bald. He was slumped in a deep chair with his feet drawn up on a settee, and his face reflecting pain.

"He must've fallen," Mordell murmured, addressing Grinsby and Goldrick.





"Nobody did it. He must've fallen in the dark."

"I don't get it," Goldrick said. "I simply can't."

"I've heard of you, Halstead," Mordell said, looking up with hard blue eyes. "Miss Waldredge says that Tom invited you to his—"

"I think that if you let Mr. Halstead do the talking," Victoria said imperiously, "we can get together on a sane basis."

"There isn't much I want to do in the way of talking," Halstead said as whis- pers died and they all looked at him.

"I didn't know you were a friend of Tom's, Halstead," Mordell said. "I've never heard him mention you."

Halstead caught the quick message in Victoria Waldredge's granitic face. He said: "Tom Gisbon had many friends. Maybe I wasn't as close to him as the rest of you."

"You don't think it was an accident, Halstead?" Willis Grinsby asked.

"It wasn't an accident," Halstead said.

Drusilla Waldredge drew in a breath sharply. She continued to stare at the fire.

"Any of you see Tom go out to his car?" Halstead asked.

"Last I saw him," Mordell volunteered, "was when he was getting his hat and coat from the stair closet. I asked him if he didn't want me to go along with him on account of the fog."

"You knew where he was headed?" Halstead queried.

"He'd said a friend of his was coming in—a chap that none of us knew. He didn't mention the name."

"He told me the name," Goldrick said. The red blunt man moved away from Grinsby. He had bushy brows, sandy and gray, mixed. He had rather fierce eyes.

"When?"

"Just before dinner," Goldrick answered. "He asked me if I'd ever heard of Arthur Halstead. I said the name sounded familiar, and I asked who the man was. Tom said he was a famous criminologist. Said he was good fun. Just like that."

"Tom asked you here because he was afraid of something," Drusilla Waldredge said suddenly in that sullen monotone.

"Drusilla!" Victoria's sharp voice silenced the sullen sister.

"Who told you he was afraid of something?" Halstead demanded.

"Nobody."

"What made you say that?"

"I know things."

"A little explanation might help," Halstead suggested.

"He's dead; nothing will help."

Halstead turned back to Mordell. "You saw Tom go out. About a quarter to nine. Nobody was in the hall with him?"

"Nobody."

"Where'd you go?"

"Up to my room. Tom said he'd be back in an hour. He wanted us all to meet his friend—you. He asked if I'd wait up. I said I would."

"You stayed in your room?"

"Until I heard a queer scream. I came to my door. I saw Will—Mr. Grinsby—hurrying along the hall to the head of the stairs. I listened a moment, then caught up with Will and asked him what on earth it was. He said he thought it was that crazy cat of Alberta's."

"That cat isn't crazy," Alberta defended. "Darius is very remarkable—"

"When'd you see Tom last, Mr. Grinsby?"

"I walked with him from the smoking-room to Miss Vicky's sitting-room," Grinsby answered readily. "I asked him if he thought he ought to go out in that fog alone. He laughed. I told Tom I wouldn't wait up, since he didn't need me. I'd just got undressed when I heard that unearthly scream. I got into my robe and started to go downstairs to see what it was about."

**H**ALSTEAD found a straight chair and dropped into it. He turned to Oliver Grayne:

"You and Goldrick left together?"

"We walked out toward the garage together," Grayne answered.

"That was long before Tom left to get his car?"

"Oh, yes. Quite. Eight-thirty, I'd say." He clasped his hands. "Wasn't it about eight-thirty, John?"

"I don't know," John Goldrick answered. "It was twenty to nine when I lit the lamps in my house."

Oliver Grayne swore that he'd seen nothing unusual on his walk through the fog. Goldrick assured Halstead that he'd been too busy with the fog to notice any-

thing other than the road as he drove to his farm.

He questioned Alberta about her cat. The little woman with the sharp nose said the animal was upstairs with her until about ten minutes before she heard the scream. She didn't know how the animal had got out. The scream came at approximately five minutes to ten. She explained that her room was at the rear of the house, and the scream sounded quite close.

Halstead wondered if a corpse could frighten a cat like that. He didn't know anything about cats. He asked: "Did Tom like this cat?"

"Tom liked Darius. He and Darius were friends. He always played with Darius."

Halstead turned to Drusilla, who still stared into the fire.

"Can you help any?"

She didn't turn to look at him, and merely shook her head.

"Why should I help? He got what was coming to him."

**W**ILLIS GRINSBY drew in breath sharply. Victoria Waldredge, still standing near the door, advanced a step. "Drusilla!" Victoria's voice was wrathful. "You're mad! Such a remark—"

"Mad!" Drusilla seemed to turn the word over in her mind. "I'm not mad. Tom Gisbon was a lying, scheming, thieving—"

"Aunt Dru," Lucy cried. "Please, Aunt Dru—"

"I'll say nothing more. No one can take my thoughts from me." For just a moment her hostile eyes rested on her eldest sister, and in Victoria's black shoe-button eyes there was a flash of fire—or was it hatred?

Halstead took a deep breath. He looked at Drusilla directly. He said: "You didn't kill him, did you?"

"I could have," Drusilla answered, again staring in the fire. "I didn't."

"I want to know why you said that."

"Willis Grinsby can tell you," Drusilla said. "He can tell you that Tom Gisbon would take pennies from a dead man's eyes. He could tell you—"

"I'm sorry, Victoria," Willis Grinsby said primly. "I won't have this. Tom Gisbon was more than my friend." He looked at Halstead. "I'm retaining you, Halstead, to iron this thing out."

"I probably won't have much luck," Halstead answered. "The Sheriff'll be here any minute. He'll ask you questions. He may jump at conclusions. I'd

advise, however, against any of this unpleasantness."

"I'll tell the Sheriff what I please," Drusilla said with defiance.

"You'll go to your room and stay there," Victoria said. "This isn't a time for personal grudges to enter into things."

"Personal grudges!" Drusilla snorted. She rose and straightened. She turned to Halstead. "I wish you luck, Mr. Halstead. But you can't have luck when they all lie to you."

She strode from the room. Her footsteps sounded like those of a man.

"Pay no attention to her," Victoria said. "She's never liked Tom, and she's let her imagination run away with her. She's never had any interest outside herself. A terribly introverted person—"

Victoria broke off sharply. She turned and went to the hall. It was a long moment before she appeared and beckoned to Halstead.

In a whisper she said: "Adam has been trying to find Joel. His car is in the garage. Tom's car is gone!"

Halstead winced.

"Gisbon's car gone! Where were you, Adam, when Gisbon left the house?"

"I was in the kitchen, sir." His voice was grave. "I spoke to him about the fog, and he laughed. He said it wouldn't bother him. I'd just taken Claudia—that's the cook, Mr. Halstead—I'd just taken her home and brought the car back. It was very warm in the kitchen, and I opened the back door to let it air out a little."

"Mr. Gisbon laughed and went out?"

"Yes sir."

"The door was still open. Mr. Gisbon didn't close it."

"Yes sir. He did. He closed it."

**R**UNNING a weary hand over his eyes, Halstead asked:

"Can you see a car leave the garage from the kitchen windows?"

"No sir. The arbor, the wood-house an' the tool-shed hides the garage."

"Did you hear a car start up shortly after Mr. Gisbon went out?"

"Oh, yes sir. I heard the motor."

"Mr. Gisbon's car's gone. It must have been his car. How long after he went out the door?"

"A minute maybe."

Halstead glanced at Victoria Waldredge.

"No trace of Joel," he muttered. "Adam, did the telephone ring between six and six-thirty?"



"I couldn't say, sir. I didn't hear it." Halstead shook his head. "When'd you see Joel Starford last, Adam?"

"He was in the smoking-room when I got ready to take the cook home."

Halstead was about to put another question when the grind of a motor in gear and the diffusion of headlights in the fog through the side-door's glass halted him. A heavy knock on the door sent Adam scurrying.

"I imagine I want to speak to Victoria Waldredge," a thin, business-like voice said at once, and Halstead recognized Elam Lucas, the Sheriff, whose voice he'd heard on the telephone.

"WHAT have you there?" Victoria's voice sounded flat and startled.

"That's one thing we got to find out, Miss Waldredge," Elam Lucas said.

Two men were carrying a human form between them.

Victoria said: "Joel!" She stepped back. The dim overhead light fell on the muddy, blood-streaked features. "Is he—dead?"

"No," Elam Lucas answered. Halstead got a look at the Sheriff. Stringy and thin, like a whip. He wore a blue business suit and a white shirt.

"Who'd you say he is, Miss Victoria?"

"Joel Starford, my nephew. He's cut—cut, and bleeding. Bring him in here."

She opened the door to that small closed parlor in which she'd interviewed Halstead on his arrival.

"Get hot water and towels," Victoria ordered. Then to the Sheriff: "Where'd you find—"

"At the edge of the road by the bridge down the drive." His voice had an irritating nasal sound.

He said, "Who's this?" and searched Halstead's mournful face.

Victoria made the introduction.

"Halstead, eh?" The Sheriff looked him up and down. "Hunh!"

"This man needs a doctor," Halstead snapped. He was examining the unconscious nephew. Joel Starford was a good six feet tall. He was much older than his sister, and had a long, more serious face. His light hair was matted with blood.

"We got a doctor with us," Elam Lucas answered. "Nothin' serious wrong. Looks like he might've hit somethin', runnin' in the dark. Mighta missed the bridge. Where's Gisbon's body?"

"I'll take you there," Halstead offered.

"We don't want no help on this," Lucas informed him.

"You won't need any," Halstead retorted. He turned to Victoria. "Maybe Miss Lucy ought to come and help look after him. If you'll give me the key to that shed—"

"I'll get it for you."

Halstead got a good chance to look over the body while the Sheriff took out Gisbon's wallet. The water dripped from the overhanging trees onto the shed roof. The fog was a milky wall at the door.

There weren't any papers or letters. The body was clad in a gray topcoat and a tweed suit with a belted back. The gloves were in the topcoat pocket. The Sheriff looked at them, dropped them. Halstead stared at the hat by the door. The water-spots were almost all gone. He looked at his own hat.

He studied the gloves, felt a sudden jump of his pulse, lifted the one for the right hand and smelled of it. Then he handed the gloves to Lucas. "Maybe you want to keep these."

Lucas shoved the gloves into his pocket without looking up from his examination of the wound. Halstead figured he would do that. Halstead never even hoped that Elam Lucas would smell the gloves or take particular notice of the small smudge of grease on the right index finger.

"I don't get it," Lucas said finally when he straightened. "You'd think that any guy who could get this close to him to sock him like that—well, it looks like Gisbon might 'a' put up a fight."

He stared around the orderly shed. Nothing out of place, nothing overturned. No sign of any struggle here.

"He must 'a' come in this shed to meet somebody," said a squat deputy with a dark greasy face. He had short, stubby fingers with dirty nails.

"He didn't come in here to borry a hoe, Henry," Lucas retorted.

Henry said: "From the look of it, he got cracked with an anvil—or a sledge." Henry began poking around the tools and looking over the workbench.

LUCAS turned to Halstead. "All right, feller, you can speak your piece now." He cleared his throat importantly. "You found the corpse?"

Halstead spoke his piece. He didn't take long. He told how he'd been invited to the wedding because Tom Gisbon loved him as an old and trusted friend.

"You didn't touch nothing?" Lucas demanded.

"I got more sense than that."

"From what I've heard of private dicks, they'll do anything. You say you're a guest here?"

"That's right. I'm all broken up by Tom's sudden—by this—"

"There's a dozen things here, Elam, he might 'a' been struck with," Henry said. "But none of 'em with blood on. None been wiped off, either, with a rag."

"Look around outside," Lucas said.

Halstead wanted to look outside too.

PORTER, the dapper young medical examiner, completed his examination and said: "Blunt instrument. It's up to you to find what it was. I'll never tell you."

"I'll find it," the Sheriff retorted testily.

"According to what I hear, this gentleman"—Porter indicated Halstead with a nod—"is a right able citizen. You might ask his advice—"

"He's just one of the suspects to me," Elam retorted.

The Doctor closed his bag, pulled his soft hat over one eye and went out whistling.

Dave, the deputy at the workbench, grunted. He was older than the Sheriff, with a broad, rough face and one tooth out in front.

"Go in the house an' see if you can get that guy we took out of the ditch awake," the Sheriff shouted out the door at the retreating medico.

Halstead didn't hear the response.

The Sheriff turned his back and went over to the workbench. As Halstead, sad-eyed, watched, his glance strayed down to his foot. He felt as if he were standing on a hot coal. If he had to take his foot away from the edge of the dead man's coat, it would be just too bad.

Halstead's eye was on the Sheriff's back, but his motion was surprisingly fast. He stooped; his long fingers closed over the thing he'd covered with his foot. Like a magician he palmed the small rumpled piece of cloth and lace—a woman's handkerchief. He shoved it into his pocket. His eyes played over the stones, and sought out the corners of the small shed.

He said to the deputy: "I don't suppose you'd let me borrow your light."

Sheriff Lucas turned quickly. "What for?"

"Thought I'd go back to the house. You don't need me down here. I'm getting chilled. Anyhow, my feet hurt."

"You just stay put a minute," Elam snapped. He got down on his haunches and looked under the workbench. He pulled at a crowbar and examined the end of it.

Halstead took advantage of the moment. He stooped again, and this time his fingers went into the right-hand pocket of the dead man's topcoat. The pocket was empty. His hand scoured around in it; then he straightened and smelled his fingers. His mouth was set hard. The dead man had carried a gun—had had it in that pocket when he was hit. Now the gun was gone. The gun had been freshly cleaned and oiled. The grease and the smell on that glove finger, and on Halstead's own fingers, told him that.

A missing gun, a woman's handkerchief!

The Sheriff dropped the crowbar, turned to Dave. "Get Henry to give you a hand soon as Mr. McNary's ambulance gets here." To Halstead: "You want to go to the house? All right, you go up with me."

They went in through the kitchen, where Adam was making coffee. The smell of the coffee was good in Halstead's wide nostrils. He sniffed.

"Where's everybody?" the Sheriff asked. He sniffed too. He had a thin, ugly nose with a hump on it, a kind of lift around the nostrils that made you think he smelled something he didn't enjoy. Halstead saw it was permanent.

"I'll take you to the living-room, sir. Mr. Joel is upstairs in his room."

HALSTEAD waited until Adam and Lucas disappeared; then he went up the back stairway and found Joel Starford's room.

At the door he withdrew the crumpled handkerchief from his pocket, held it under the dim light. It hadn't lain on that damp flagstone very long. It was still crisp from laundering, and there was a monogram in script in the corner.

He frowned at the letters and finally made them out. C B C. They didn't mean a thing to him. Nobody in this house by those initials. Possibly someone had put the handkerchief in Gisbon's pocket and had forgotten it. And possibly Gisbon had jerked it out as he fell. Maybe the C was a G and the thing belonged to Gisbon's sister, or mother or—

The door opened suddenly in his face. Lucille Starford uttered a small, "Oh!"



Halstead said: "Sorry, Miss Starford. I was just about to knock. Your brother is—"

"He's just regained consciousness. He's in terrible misery. I'm going to call our family doctor."

"I'll stay with him until you get back," Halstead offered.

"Please don't be— I don't think he can talk now, Mr. Halstead."

HALSTEAD went in. Starford was lying in bed. He was in a lounging-robe and his shoes had been removed. A large bandage was above his left eye, and bandages swathed his right hand. There were patches of bandage and tape on either cheek. The Sheriff's medico had done a good job. Joel's eyes were feverish as they stared at Halstead.

"Take it easy," Halstead said. "What hit you?"

"His car." The man talked with difficulty, with a kind of hesitance.

"Whose car?"

"Gisbon's. I tried to—thumb—to stop him—" The voice trailed off.

"The car smacked you."

"It ran right at me—ran me down!"

Halstead slumped on the foot of the bed. "Your sister tell you who I am?"

"No." He closed his eyes and moved his lips as if to get a bad taste out of his mouth. "Who are you?" His mouth made a dry, clacking noise.

"What did you want to stop Gisbon's car for?"

"I wanted to talk with Gisbon."

"About what?"

"It's not—I can't tell you that."

"You know Gisbon's dead?" Halstead watched the pained face.

Joel Starford's eyes snapped wide. "You mean—" He tried to raise himself.

"It wasn't Gisbon that hit you."

"It had to be. He—left the house to get his car. Went out through the kitchen. I went out the porch door—walked down near the bridge."

"Why? If you wanted a private talk with him, you could've had it without—"

"Not in this house." He looked into Halstead's moist eyes. "With these old-maid aunts—nothing here could be—private. Especially—since they—kept watching me and spying on me—" He closed his eyes again.

"You better tell me what you wanted with Gisbon. If you don't tell me, the Sheriff'll pound it out of you somehow."

"To hell with the Sheriff!" Then quickly: "Who are you?"

"Innocent bystander," Halstead asserted. "Friend of the dead man; Halstead is the name. You'd better tell me what made you try to thumb Gisbon's car."

The wide mouth set stubbornly. "Believe me, Halstead, I can't do that."

"Why?"

"It involves—well, there's no need even to speak of it."

"What's the woman's name?"

Starford winced. "You read minds?"

"Maybe the initials," Halstead shot, "might be C. B. C."

Joel Starford did sit up this time—sat up and stared with narrowed eyes at Halstead's innocent wistful face. "How much do you know?"

"Not enough," Halstead answered. "You're a No. 1 suspect in the murder of Tom Gisbon. You hated him. Tonight, within thirty seconds after he went out of the kitchen door, he was murdered. Everybody in the house in one way or another was accounted for at that particular time with the exception of Joel Starford. Get it?"

"I get it."

"Joel Starford didn't want his sister to marry Tom Gisbon."

"Certainly, I didn't."

"Joel Starford's found about an hour after the murder in a pretty banged-up condition," Halstead said. "Found by the Sheriff himself, who said: 'Looks like he was runnin' away from some-thin' an' fell over a log, or somethin'.'"

"So what?"

"So if you tell me now what you wanted to tell Gisbon—"

Halstead broke off as, reflected in the bureau mirror across the bed, he saw the door opening soundlessly. He turned.

Adam's furrowed face appeared. Adam said: "Mrs. Halstead would like you to come at once to her, sir. She says it's—it's urgent."

Halstead frowned. The door widened, and Lucille Starford entered even as the gaunt servant withdrew.

Lucy's pale skin seemed whiter. She said: "Sheriff Lucas is coming up in a moment, Joel. If you could only stay, Mr. Halstead."

"Sorry," Halstead said. "But I'll be back."

At the head of the stairs, Halstead heard the Sheriff's thin voice. He was saying: "Don't let any of 'em leave the room, Henry, until I get back. Jake, you go an' find that bird with the sad puss—that Halstead."



Halstead bolted into his room. He banged the door shut—then stopped, blinked, and tried to re-focus his eyes.

Marie said: "It's all right. I think he's harmless, but I'm just not taking chances." She held a small gun leveled at a tall, dark and handsome young man.

Halstead said: "My God! What will you do next!"

"This ought to tickle you pink," Marie said.

The young man said: "I thought it was fun at first too. When I saw she meant it—"

"Here we got a murdered man," Halstead mumbled, "and a house full of sheriffs, and Joel Starford almost killed, and now you turn up with a total stranger—"

"He's not a total stranger," Marie said. "At least, he wasn't acting like one when I stuck this rod in his ribs. I mean—"

"Please," the young man said, "I'd like a chance to tell you just how—"

"I think you two ought to meet," Marie interrupted, impishly. "He says his name's Carsleigh, Arthur. He says—"

"Bob Carsleigh?" Halstead gasped. Then he sat down heavily.

"Yes, and if you give me a chance to tell you how it happened—"

"You mean the murder?"

"No. I knew nothing about the murder until—until this young lady told me she was doing me a favor by taking me captive."

"Where in the name of heaven did you find him?" Halstead asked Marie.

"In Lucy Starford's room."

one of several occasions, and wasn't a bit sorry that somebody had at last done it.

"It wasn't you?" Halstead asked wistfully.

"It wasn't I." Mr. Carsleigh had a nice smile.

Bob admitted that he was madly in love with Lucy, always had been and always would be, despite Carmen—

"Who's Carmen?" Halstead demanded. His fingers became tight in his pockets. One hand clutched the kerchief.

"Lucy must've told you," said Bob.

"Why'd you come here tonight?" Halstead asked.

"To kidnap Lucy. I couldn't—let her go on with that marriage. And now she isn't going on with it—can't go on with it, and I—"

"Let's get back to Carmen. You married her in New Orleans. What was her maiden name?"

"Blanqui," Carsleigh's brows raised in an unvoiced query.

"How did she happen to know Gibson?"

Halstead's question brought Carsleigh to his feet, his jaw set.

"Don't tell me she was working on him too." His fists suddenly clenched.

"That's what I want somebody to tell me," Halstead answered. "Who else was she working on, to your knowledge?"

Bob Carsleigh helped himself to a cigarette before he answered. Then he said: "It's a queer mess."

"What?"

"The whole sordid thing—Carmen coming here, Joel trying to help me—"

"What's Joel got to do with it?" Halstead began rummaging in his pockets and Marie came up with a lighted cigarette for him.

Carsleigh exhaled through his nostrils. His dark eyes were clear and bright. "It all grew out of a scheme Joel and I tried to work out together," he explained. "You see, I'd been trying to get something that would give me grounds for a

## Chapter Six

BOB CARSLEIGH, who had high cheek bones, a firm wide mouth, and something carefree and reckless in his poise, answered Halstead's questions almost glibly. He admitted he hated Gibson, would have killed him gladly on any



divorce action. Carmen had made up her mind that she wouldn't let me divorce her. She could play around all she pleased, but she was still tied to me, and I had nothing I could bring up in a court proceeding. No evidence against her. She never left me—I left her. And I knew as long as I couldn't divorce her, I couldn't have Lucy. And Lucy was coming close to her wedding-day with Gisbon.

"Joel agreed with me to make a play for Carmen. I know it sounds like the devil, fantastic and all that. He was to make a play for Carmen and provide me with evidence of infidelity. He—fell in love with her. Genuinely. At least he thinks it's love. You only have to be around her an hour, Halstead, and you'll probably know what it is."

"She's at your place now?" Halstead asked. "How do you get there?"

"It's the adjoining estate on the east, on the way to Carverdale," Bob said. "She's there with a French maid and a Japanese butler, and I don't know what else."

"How'd you get into Lucy's room?"

"Through the window," Bob answered, flushing.

"Like a burglar," Marie said. "There I was—"

"Yeh, there you were," Halstead groaned. "What were you there for?"

"I went to wait for Lucy to come up. I wanted to ask her some questions."

"She didn't look like she was waiting very quietly to me—not with that gun," Bob Carsleigh said. "She just about frightened me out of my wits."

"Didn't you see her when you came through the window?"

"No—it was dark. I was in the room. She came out of a closet door and snapped a light on. She stuck that gun in my back and told me to move quietly. I got a glimpse of her through the mirror, and thought it was a joke. She brought me in here. Then she rang for the butler and kept me covered while she cracked the door enough to tell him to go for you."

**B**UT you've got no alibi for yourself between eight and ten-thirty?"

"No," Bob admitted. He explained that he'd driven up from Washington, had stopped in Carverdale for cocktails around eight, and then had driven slowly out through the fog, forming his fantastic plans for an abduction. He told how he drove into the woods, where he

could sit and watch Lucy's window, how he'd seen a light go on, then off, and decided to go up the trellis and assert himself for the last time.

"This gets worse, the more you talk," Halstead mumbled morbidly. "When the Sheriff finds out—"

"But I don't have to see the Sheriff," Bob broke in.

"There's the window and the trellis," Marie suggested brightly.

**A** POUNDING on the door, and the voice of the Sheriff calling Halstead's name, interrupted them.

Halstead waved Marie into the small adjoining room and sent Bob with her. Then he strolled over and unlocked the hall door.

Lucas lunged in and looked around sharply. His bright eyes saw the smoke curling up from two ash-trays.

"I heard a woman talking in here," the Sheriff blurted. "I want to know—"

"You heard my wife. She's—"

Halstead broke off as Lucas spotted the sitting-room door. Lucas started toward it. Halstead put a hand on the Sheriff's sleeve.

"You don't know much about the law," Halstead said. "My wife's in there, and she's not dressed."

"I'll go where I please. This is murder. If you know anything—"

"You won't go in there! If you want to see Mrs. Halstead, she'll come out—when she's—when she gets her clothes on. She's upset enough—"

Lucas strode forcefully to the door. He gripped the knob. He started to turn it. He only started, however.

Halstead's arm was terrifically fast. His long fingers gripped the collar of Sheriff Elam Lucas' coat. His right foot kicked up in behind the Sheriff's knees, and the Sheriff hit the floor on his back. His head bounced on the carpet. His hat rolled under the bed.

"Why, you damned—"

Halstead reached down and jerked the Sheriff erect, virtually set him on his feet. "Don't say it, Lucas," he said quietly. "I don't want to have to take you apart when you got all this trouble on your mind."

"You're obstructing justice—you're assaulting an officer! I'm searching this house for Robert Carsleigh. He's here. He's hiding. My men've found his car down in the woods. He's—"

The door from the sitting-room opened and Marie appeared. She was a

vision in an orchid lace and satin negligee against the soft rose light behind her. She said: "I thought I heard someone, Arthur—"

"The Sheriff," Halstead said. A cold sweat broke over his brow. Surely Marie didn't undress and get into this rig with Bob Carsleigh in there and—

"Sorry." She gave the Sheriff a big smile.

"Sheriff, I'm so worried—about Tom Gisbon and everything that's happened. You *do* think you'll find whoever did it?"

"We're tryin', ma'am. We got a strong lead now—we're huntin' Bob Carsleigh. Combin' the house an' grounds. Otherwise we wouldn't be botherin' you." He was on his feet and ill at ease. Marie had a way with men like this.

"Maybe my husband could help," Marie said archly. "He's been known to blunder into some strange solutions. Haven't you, dear Arthur?"

"I got plenty help. It aint that—"

"You know what they say about two heads, Sheriff," Marie purred. Then, abruptly: "Perhaps you'd like to look around in here." She nodded toward the sitting-room.

The Sheriff glanced at Halstead, went to the door, glanced into the room, came back.

He was all at once blustery and belligerent. "I aint bein' kidded, by any chance, am I?" He jutted his chin a little at Halstead.

"Why, Sheriff!" It was Marie who spoke. "I suppose in your field, though, you've got to be suspicious."

She moved toward the hall door. The Sheriff followed her.

"You want me downstairs any more tonight?" Halstead asked him, as Marie opened the door. "I'm pretty tired—"

"No. I'm givin' orders to everybody to stay put. I'm leavin' three men on duty in the house to watch it. I want you all here when I come back in the mornin'."

The Sheriff went into the hall.

"**W**HAT'D you do with the No. 2 suspect?" Halstead demanded of Marie. "How'd you undress in there—"

"He's locked in a closet. He's sweet, don't you think, Arthur?"

"He's just another fly in a nasty dose of ointment, if you ask me." Halstead glanced at the sitting-room door. "He leaves his car in the woods; he comes up here for an abduction. He's been sitting in the woods an hour or more. That

sounds like so much bologna. He's sitting in the woods. Joel is out to thumb a ride. Gisbon's car's tearing down the drive like mad. It deliberately strikes Joel before he can quite jump clear. The car disappears. Only Gisbon wasn't in it. One thing certain: Gisbon's ghost wasn't at the wheel."

"Maybe Gisbon's killer was," Marie offered. "Maybe if they can find that car—"

"Listen, when they find that car, there won't even be a fingerprint." He glanced at the windows. Then, abruptly: "Turn out the lights."

She turned out the lights. Halstead looked into the fog a moment to get his eyes accustomed to the gloom. Then, in little more than a whisper: "That porch roof runs all along the west wall of this wing."

She was at his side in the dark. There was a fragrance about her that was a little suffocating. She said: "I could've told you that."

He slid the window up. "Go get Carsleigh."

The fog sifted into the room—cold, like the touch of a lifeless hand.

**F**OOTSTEPS sounded stealthily behind him. There was a swish of satin. Then Marie was at his side with a whisper: "Now what?"

Halstead turned to the tall captive. "The Sheriff got your car."

"That's nice," Bob Carsleigh breathed.

"Any place over at your house you could put up?"

"The caretaker's house. Why?"

"We're going over. You don't have to see your wife, but I do. It's a little past eleven. If I have to wake her, that's okay by me. Anybody in the caretaker's house?"

"A worthless white named Riggs."

"You stay under cover there," Halstead whispered. "And I mean *under cover*. Lucy Starford'll keep now. I'll even tell her you're pining your heart out—"

"What do you want with Carmen?"

Halstead ignored the question. "We can get out through this window. You show me where the trellis comes up the porch. I'll go down first."

"What do I do?" Marie demanded.

"Lock yourself in and go to bed," Halstead answered.

Halstead, with an eye to his footing, failed to see the hunched figure standing at the foot of the porch steps until almost too late. Almost—but not quite.



He was at the bottom of the trellis, which didn't go all the way to the ground. A small leap down to the drive was necessary. It was just when he started to take this leap that he saw the figure, and the figure saw him.

The grim shadow said: "Hold it, you! I got you covered—"

It was Dave, the deputy. Halstead, in the next second, had Dave covered, but not in the same way: Dave was on the ground, and Halstead was on top of him. Then Halstead smacked Dave behind the ear, and Dave didn't say anything more.

Bob Carsleigh said: "My God, you've conked him."

Halstead was sad about it. He said: "Gimme a hand. We'll take him to the tool-shed."

The door to the tool-shed was open, and Gibson's body was gone. Halstead groped for the box he'd seen on the workbench when the Sheriff and his deputies had been pawing over it. His fingers found the stack of clean rags in a cardboard carton. It didn't take long to fix a gag with the rags and a bunch of cotton waste.

"We've got to get out of here," Carsleigh whispered urgently. "I don't like this. I mean—"

Halstead found the garden twine and tied Dave's wrists and ankles. Then he rolled the unconscious man over on his side, put a wad of burlap under his head for a pillow and whispered: "Sweet dreams, Dave."

"Do you think he recognized you when you jumped?" Carsleigh asked in awe.

"We'll know when he tells his tale to Mr. Lucas," Halstead answered wearily. "Now how do we get to your place? You lead the way."

CARSLEIGH'S house was low and rambling—part stone, part frame, and even part logs with stucco over them. It was on a small hill with huge trees all around it, and a white picket fence closing in the lawn.

Halstead found the gate and went up the walk to the solid door. No light was visible. No bark of a dog, no stirring of anything. He had left Bob Carsleigh a short distance down the lane at the caretaker's house. He hesitated before he raised the brass knocker, and thought of what Bob Carsleigh had told him about this woman he'd married.

"She'll slay you, Halstead. She slays 'em all. She's a slant-eyed wench with—well, she's got a way of looking at you."

Halstead banged the knocker, and the tone sounded hollow beyond the door. He stood back on the stoop and listened. Water dripped on his hat and he moved. It dripped down on his shoulder.

Once more he banged the knocker, this time more insistently, and then tried the knob gently. The door was locked.

AN oblong blur in the fog above the door told him that a light had been switched on. An instant later he heard soft, quick steps in the hall.

A key turned, and the door opened a trifle, and Halstead was conscious of the glint of light in blue-black hair and a quick intake of breath as the woman's eyes saw him and widened, and she made a quick effort to close the door. But Halstead's hand was on the knob and his arm iron-stiff against her pressure.

He said, "Just a minute, Mrs. Carsleigh," and was half in the doorway before the woman cried out:

"Who are you? What do you mean by this?" Her slant eyes flamed.

"I know it's late, but not too late," Halstead said. He closed the door. "Let's sit down. I'm tired. I walked a long way."

"I demand to know—"

"All right; I'm a detective. I'm working on a wacky murder case. A guy's dead. You might be an important witness."

"Murder?" That stopped her. Her eyes became slits. Her lips parted over even teeth. "I don't understand. I—you must have the wrong place. My—"

"I'm in the right place. We got to talk this over. Light a light in there. I like a fireplace."

A fire in the hearth had almost burned out. The woman went over and put a log on it. She wore a long black housecoat. Her hips were round under it, and the shimmer was in the snug fit on the hip curve. She wore black satin slippers with three-inch heels. Her hair was combed back over her ears in a long wave, and ear-drops in black completed the picture.

Halstead slumped into the corner of the low divan in front of the fire.

"Sit there." Halstead indicated the settle by the hearth.

"I prefer to stand. This, of course, is absurd. I don't usually admit—"

"When I get through, maybe you won't be able to stand. You'd better sit now while you can." He fixed her with his wistful eyes. There was fear in her

glance for a moment; then her eyelids drooped and she took a seat.

"What's happened?" She eyed him narrowly, "Who's—"

"You probably didn't do it," Halstead mused. He stretched his feet out toward the fire.

"Listen, how do I know you're a detective? How do I know—"

"I'm trying to find out a couple things." He straightened suddenly. "You know who killed Tom Gisbon tonight?"

She couldn't hide that catch in her throat. She couldn't hide the quick rise of her curving breast, nor the mad pulse in her neck.

She said: "You're the most surprising person! You mention people I don't know. You expect me—"

"You know Joel Starford," Halstead said. He found a cigarette on the coffee table and rolled it between his fingers.

"Well?"

"Well, you knew Gisbon too. Tonight, between eight-thirty and nine, you were over at Joel Starford's house."

"Do all detectives imagine things like that?" She smiled now, and Halstead knew what Bob Carsleigh had meant. "I've never been this close to a detective before."

"You don't know how close you came to being right in the county Sheriff's lap. Me? I got lots of patience, Mrs. Carsleigh. I can sit here as long as the wood lasts. It's a nasty night out there, and I'm in no hurry to get back to Waldredge Hall." He inhaled luxuriously.

SHE said: "Really?" She rose. "I'm sorry, but I was just going to bed when you called. Perhaps you'll come again sometime when nobody's been killed and your imagination isn't running away with you."

"This local Sheriff's a pretty tough person," Halstead mused. He didn't get up. "He's not missing any angles. Joel's the No. 1 suspect now. Joel can't explain how he almost got killed right after Gisbon was bumped off. And I mean bumped off. If you could see that hole in the front of his head."

"You say Joel Starford—" She broke off as if she'd already said too much.

"You ought to know," Halstead said. "You were there."

"But I didn't—I wasn't there. I don't know what—"

"Sit down again. Tell me something: What made you move into this house recently?"

"It's my husband's house. I've got a right to move into it."

"I know. You haven't answered my question. Why'd you move—"

"I don't intend to answer your question."

"Maybe you'll answer this one. What'd you do tonight between eight-thirty and nine?"

"I was upstairs, reading."

"Your maid with you? Can she give you an alibi?"

"My maid is in Washington tonight."

"How about the Japanese butler? I understood—"

"He left on Monday. An agency is to send me another one tomorrow—"

"All right, let's get to eight-thirty tonight. I want to know why you went to Waldredge Hall and what happened when Tom Gisbon's head was crushed in."

She laughed. It was a strange hollow laugh, with some mad, hysterical quality to it. Suddenly it ended; the red lips twitched and the black eyes flamed.

"Get out!"

Halstead had never heard a phrase so expressive. He got up and went to the door with a droop to his shoulders and his hands thrust deep into the pockets of his long dark coat. In the hall he turned to her. The fury was still in her eyes. She was more beautiful than any other woman he had ever seen.

He paused with one hand on the knob. The other drew out the crumpled bit of linen and lace. He held it so she could see it.

"I'll bring you this tomorrow," he said quietly. "In the morning. After you've had a chance to think about it a little."

"Where—where'd you get that?" She stared at the handkerchief fascinatedly.

"Under the dead man's body," Halstead answered casually. "Good night, Mrs. Carsleigh."

"But you can't— Give me—"

He shut the door and disappeared into the fog.

## Chapter Seven

THE fog was still heavy against the windows the following morning, as Halstead breakfasted with Marie in his room. He had slept badly. And he was disappointed when Marie, on being told of his visit to Carmen, and of his discovery of Carmen's handkerchief under Gisbon's coat, seemed not surprised.



Marie gave him a jolt, however, when she went to her small room and returned with a sheet of paper on which she'd arranged several torn scraps across which was a bold feminine scrawl.

Halstead gazed at them curiously. "Where'd you get these?"

"From beneath an envelope, that was lodged in the bottom of Lucy's wastebasket." Marie smiled at him proudly. "I'd discovered them after I'd found her letters from Bob carefully preserved with a blue ribbon around them. She's very much in love with Mr. Carsleigh, if you should happen to ask me."

"And Mr. Carsleigh's very much of a liar," Halstead asserted. "My hunch is that he lied about sitting in his car last night watching her window. She was probably out there in the car with him, was just coming from it when you saw her."

Halstead squinted at the pattern made by the torn pieces—an irregular oblong—evidently part of the middle of a page. The handwriting was feminine.

*—the whole thing sheer madne—  
—From the very fir—  
—must seem cruel of me—  
—can't help my—*

Halstead said, "Hunh," down in his throat. "How'd you know it's her handwriting?"

"It matches the writing in her address-book on her desk."

"You mind all details," he mumbled. "I'll talk to her."

"You'd better talk to Adam, too. About that ax. Lucy told you she was sure it was Adam who followed the person with the ax night before last."

"I wish I knew if it were an ax that killed Gisbon," Halstead mused. "The Sheriff couldn't find a weapon. I looked over that tool-house while he was searching. Everything was in it but an ax."

**A**DAM came presently for the breakfast-tray.

Halstead raised a detaining hand.

"Adam, what's happened to the ax that ought to be in the tool-shed?"

"Why, sir—I—don't know. We have an ax, but—" He broke off with lips parted.

"Who was in the upper passage night before last, carrying an ax and—walking along the hall with a light?"

"So help me, sir, I—I don't know what you're talking about."

"You weren't in the hall about two in the morning—yesterday morning?"

"I was not, sir. My quarter's in the kitchen wing. I've a room downstairs off the kitchen. I didn't leave it—I didn't get out of my bed night before last or early yesterday morning, like you say. No sir, I didn't."

"Who was in the house Monday night—night before last, Adam?"

"Well, there was Miss Victoria an' her two sisters, an' Miss Lucy,"—he was counting on his gnarled fingers—"an' Mr. Joel, an'—oh, yes, Mr. Grayne spent the night here. Then there was Mr. Mordell, from Baltimore. He's been here since Saturday. Spent the week-end here, he did, sir. That's all."

"Mr. Gisbon wasn't here?"

"No sir. He spent Sunday here. An' Mr. Mordell wasn't feelin' well Monday morning, so Mr. Gisbon said he ought to stay right here an' rest. He was to be one of the ushers at the weddin', sir. Mr. Gisbon said he wouldn't be able to get up from Washington, Monday. Mr. Grinsby came in Monday evenin' for a few minutes, but he went right on back to the city when he found Mr. Gisbon wasn't here."

"What time was that?"

"Right at dinner-time. Miss Victoria wanted him to stay to dinner, but he didn't. He said he had to get down an' find Mr. Gisbon right away."

**S**O you didn't know, Adam, that somebody took the ax out of the tool-house about two o'clock yesterday morning—Tuesday morning?"

"No sir."

"Thanks, Adam. Don't say anything about it."

"I won't, sir. An' now, if you won't be needin' me, I'd better get to Miss Victoria with her breakfast before she gets in a temper, sir."

Halstead didn't say anything after Adam closed the door.

Marie said: "He's lying too?"

"I don't know." Halstead was all at once glum and depressed.

"But Miss Starford told you that she heard Adam walking along that passage after the figure with the ax passed her."

"That's what she said—and that's just it. You can't hear the man walk."

Halstead shaved, and thought of the telegram Marie had sent Gisbon, which someone in the house had apparently intercepted. He came out of the small bath that opened off the sitting-room and saw Marie, in her smart mulberry suit, taking a camera from a field case.

"I'm going out for a walk," she said brightly. "If I see something that ought to be shot, I'll shoot it. I saw an article on the camera in crime-detection just the other day."

"If the Sheriff sees you snapping a shutter—"

An insistent pounding on the hall door broke into his speech. He turned startled eyes to his secretary.

It was Adam.

"The Sheriff, sir. I think something terrible's happened. He wants everybody down in the smoking-room as soon as they can come."

THE smoking-room was in the east wing on the left of the cross-corridor. It was blue with smoke and bad language when Halstead appeared.

The first person he saw was the deputy, Dave. And Dave looked like hell. He was rubbing his wrists and rubbing his neck. His face was red, his lips blue and cracked.

Sheriff Lucas turned with a snarl at Halstead's quiet appearance.

"When can we get out of here and get back home?" Halstead asked innocently.

"Nobody'll get out of here till I run this thing to earth. An' when I find who tied up my deputy an' subjected him to brutal punishment an'—"

"What deputy?"

"This man, here," the Sheriff blazed. "Swung on an' attacked out there in the fog by three men! Beat an' pummeled an' knocked down an' tromped on."

"If it'd only been one of 'em," Dave said, "I coulda took keer of myself. But the three that hit me—"

"Where was this?"

"Right out there by the side porch, Halstead. Right under the room, almost—where you an' your wife lay." Elam Lucas was trembling in his wrath. "You tell 'im about it, Dave."

"Well, there I'm standin' guard, just makin' my rounds like Elam told me—doin' my duty, by God—an' I hear a sound, an' look up, an' here's this thing on the porch jumpin' at me. I try to drag out m'gun, but it's a-comin' through the air like a plummet, it is. It's a man, an' right behin' him's two others. All of 'em jumpin' off the porch-rail at once. Three ag'in' one."

"You couldn't shoot?" queried Halstead.

"I couldn't get a-hold of my gun. All I could do was slug. I ducked an' swung on the guy that jumped first. Clipped



'im on the button, by God! The others—hell, I didn't have a chance. I swung a couple punches; then one of 'em snuck up behind an' let me have it. Next thing I knowed I was on the floor in that tool-house in the dark, an' I couldn't even make a sound. Gagged, I was, an' tied—"

"You couldn't identify any of these men?" Halstead pressed.

"All of 'em big an' husky. Couldn't see their faces. That fog was so thick. But they all wore black caps. I can guarantee that, an' their faces has got the marks of my dukes, you can bet."

"You didn't hear nothin' in your room, Halstead?" The Sheriff's voice was skeptical.

"I guess I slept like a log," Halstead answered.

"How about the lady?"

"Listen, if she'd heard anything, she'd've yelled. She's skittish. She's so afraid of this house right now that she's begging me to take her back to Washington. Afraid almost to go out of her room."

"She looked to me like she could take care of herself," Lucas growled. "An' you—I owe you something for that rough stuff last night! If it hadn't been for the lady—"

"You owe me a lot more'n you think you do, Sheriff," Halstead cut in. "And now, with your permission, I'd like to make a phone-call—"

"Who you want to call up?"

HALSTEAD started to speak, but over the Sheriff's shoulder he saw Marie, her face grave.

"I said, who you want to call up?"

"My office," Halstead answered. His face didn't change; but his pulses leaped, for behind the Sheriff's back, Marie was making frantic signs that indicated something urgent.

"What about your office?"

"Damn it," Halstead snapped, "I want to tell my man there that—that I'm going to be detained. He expected me back this evening. If you want Dave to go with me and listen to what I say—"

"To hell with that! Dave don't get out o' my sight."



"It'll take me three or four minutes," Halstead pleaded. "I've answered what you asked me about Dave's trouble. So now—"

"Okay, go make—"

The disappearance of Marie from the door, and the entrance of George Mordell, huge and untidy, with Willis Grinsby right behind him, took the Sheriff's attention.

Halstead nodded to them, headed for the door, stopped to step aside and let Drusilla Waldredge enter. The sullen woman didn't even look at him as she passed.

Marie was standing at the junction with the entrance hall. Halstead glanced up and down the hall before he spoke. Then he saw Lucy Starford in the shadows by the telephone-table, saw the way she leaned against the wall, saw the tragic look in her green eyes.

"Bob just called," Marie said. "He took a desperate chance. We've got to take one too. We've—"

"It's horrible," Lucy Starford breathed through dry lips. "It's—"

"Called about what?" Halstead felt his muscles tense along his arms.

"Carmen's—been murdered."

Marie spoke barely above a whisper. Halstead took it between the eyes as if it had been a physical blow. His eyes widened, then narrowed.

"Where'd Carsleigh call from?"

"From his house. Adam answered the telephone, and Bob asked for you. When Adam told him he couldn't get you right away on account of being with the Sheriff, he broke it to Lucy, and she came running upstairs to me."

"HES there now—at his house?"

"Oh—yes," Lucy said.

"Nothing to do but get the Sheriff and go over and—"

"We—you can't." Lucy's fingers closed over Halstead's sleeve. "You go. I'll go with you. We've got to help Bob. He needs us—desperately."

"Look, Miss Starford, if it's murder—"

"Please, don't you see, Mr. Halstead?" Lucy pleaded. "First it was Tom—on the night before our wedding—killed by that—awful blow. And now Carmen, who was married to Bob, and wouldn't free him—and Bob in love with me—"

"You stay here with Marie," Halstead ordered in sudden decision. He glanced along the hall toward the smoking-room door.

"But I must go—"

"The Sheriff'll want to talk to you. Bad enough for one of us to be missing. I'll get over there—"

"I'll tell Mr. Lucas," Marie said, "that you took a little walk. Of course he mightn't ask. What he doesn't know won't hurt him."

"Nor any of the rest of us," Halstead agreed. "I'll make it fast." He started for the door, hesitated, returned a step. He faced Lucy. "And while I'm away, you might think up a reasonable story about being out in the fog last night, a little while after Gisbon was hit."

## Chapter Eight

MR. ARTHUR HALSTEAD being a gentleman who was always prepared to meet the worst, didn't even raise his brows over the sight that met him at the foot of the stairs in the central hall at Carsleigh's house.

The hall was wide and dim, and had a low ceiling. It ran straight through the middle of the house, with a door in the rear and that opened onto a back porch. It was through this door that he entered with Bob Carsleigh at his heels—Bob Carsleigh, his face white and haggard, and his lips bloodless.

Carmen lay on the faded carpet, half on her left side. Blood spread in a little pool beneath the blue-black hair. The fine wide brow had a hole above the left eye, small and black-rimmed and ugly. The dark eyes stared in fixed focus, and the face that Halstead had thought the most beautiful he'd ever seen, was distorted in a kind of horror.

She lay there as if death had come to her immediately after Halstead's exit from the massive old doorway.

Bob watched Halstead walk widely around the body and frown down on it. He leaned against the newel-post, and his fingers trembled when he held a match to a cigarette. He dropped the match to the carpet, stooped and recovered it.

Halstead squinted up and down the hall, then up the stairway. He returned to the body and felt the hand. He raised the hand and Bob said: "Don't! That's—ghastly."

"Just stiff," Halstead mumbled. "*Rigor mortis* set in hours ago. I don't need the medico to tell me." He went to the living-room door and looked in. He took in the position of the settle.

Suddenly his eyes narrowed, and he hurried forward with long steps. He

looked at the ash-trays, then at the two glasses on the small silver server. He picked up one of the glasses and smelled of it and made a wry face. He poked into the ash-tray that he himself had used, and took out a couple of stubs. He picked up the book of matches from the corner of the divan and handed it to Bob Carsleigh. The lithograph on the book was a picture of the apartment hotel where Bob lived.

"So you were the company she expected at midnight," Halstead said wearily. "That's why when I called she didn't hesitate about opening the door. Only she saw a little too late that I wasn't who she was looking for."

"I feel slightly sick," Bob said.

"You got good reason to," Halstead answered. "You say you didn't kill Gisbon."

"I swear—"

"And now you'll tell me you didn't kill Carmen."

"No, certainly I didn't. I—"

"She's been dead nine or ten hours," Halstead reflected aloud. "I saw her near midnight. She was on the verge of a break. If a woman was ever fighting to keep up her nerve, she was. Once she did break—just for a minute. I don't want to hear a woman laugh like that again—not soon."

"I can explain my coming—"

"Sure you can," Halstead cut in. "Just the way you explained last night about how you got to Lucy's place, and how you sat there in your car, and how after a long time, an hour or so, you casually walked up through the woods to the porch. You didn't mention seeing Lucy in the woods."

"I didn't see her!"

"NO use holding back anything," Halstead said. "I know Lucy was out in the fog sometime after Gisbon was murdered. I know she came back to the house, and not casually, either. She came back as if she was scared to death somebody would see her."

"I don't know about that. I know I didn't see her. If she was out in the fog—" He broke off as if afraid to commit himself.

Halstead waved a thin hand. "We'll pass it." He stared into the black fireplace. Then, with a sudden lift of his head: "I don't suppose you saw your wife while you waited in the fog in Lucy's woods, either."

"God, no! She wasn't there too?"

"I don't know—she said she wasn't. But I think she lied. I can ask Joel Starford. He'll say he didn't see her, either. He'll say he didn't see anybody." He kicked at a half-burned log that had fallen onto the hearth. "What'd you come here for after I left?"

"I simply had to see Carmen, to find out if there—if there was any chance that she'd divorce me, or let me—"

"You work fast. That doesn't sound so good."

"What doesn't?"

"You come from the scene of a murder—the murder of a guy who stood in your way to getting Lucy Starford—to see the only other obstacle in your way: Your wife! And she knew you were coming, didn't she?"

"YES." Carsleigh tossed his cigarette into the fireplace. His voice was without life.

"How'd she know it?"

"I called Carmen from Carverdale. I'd been thinking about how Joel had gone overboard about her—thinking about my own tangled affairs. I was determined she shouldn't make a fool out of Joel. I called her from the Mansion House and asked her if she'd be in. She said she'd be out for a while, but if I didn't make it too late, she'd wait up for me. That was before my idea of one last appeal to Lucy to get out of this wedding, began to take definite form in my mind."

"So Carmen said she'd be out for a while."

"Yes. She said she ought to be back by ten or a little after. I could stop then. I said I might. Later, in the woods, I forgot all about her—forgot about talking to her, until I was walking up the woods path with you. When I reached the caretaker's house, I decided I'd go to see her. I'd make one more effort to have it out with her, try to get her to reach some agreement with me."

"You told her Gisbon was out of your way?"

"I resent that, Mr. Halstead. Your implication—"

"Go ahead and resent. Everybody resents everything I do. Did you tell her about Gisbon being found dead, or mention Gisbon, or—"

"I didn't."

"What kind of reception did she give you?"

"As you say, she was on the edge of her nerves. She was fighting something. She tried to be sleek and purring. She's



always been that with me. But she couldn't sit down."

"You told her what you'd come for?"

"I started to. She tried the old stuff. Came over and—and—melted in my arms. She said she knew what a beast she'd been, but I was all that mattered to her. She had to get away from everything. I had to take her away. We could start all over. All that sort of rot. From her! When I couldn't trust her out of my sight!" His lips curled savagely.

"What'd you do?"

"I made a grave error. I laughed at her. She cracked under that. Then we both said a lot of things to each other that civilized people usually don't say. Finally I walked out."

Halstead nodded to the glasses on the tray. "She had a drink with you?"

"Brandy, straight," Carsleigh replied. "That was when I first came in."

"You left her, walked out on her. Where'd you go then?"

"To the caretaker's cottage. He was away. I spent the night there and got up and fixed coffee for myself this morning. I went outside, trying to decide whether to go over to Lucy's and give myself up, when I got a glimpse of a car driving away from the house. I walked in that direction and saw the back door open. And when I went up to—to see Carmen again—well, I saw her—like this."

"What do you think we ought to do now?"

"That's up to you, Mr. Halstead. This case is in your hands. I'm not well heeled, but whatever your fee is—"

"You didn't see the car that pulled away from here?"

"No."

Halstead parked Bob Carsleigh on the divan. "I'll take a look around." He hurried up the stairway, found Carmen's room, then shook his head. He knew it wouldn't be much use to look for anything. Somebody'd saved him all the trouble. Every pigeonhole in her desk, and each drawer, had been rifled; the floor was strewn with letters, bills, canceled checks and clippings.

**H**ALSTEAD gathered up a handful and sat down on the stool before the dressing-table mirror. He tried to find a memo with addresses and telephone-numbers. There wasn't any book.

He took up the telephone and asked for the long-distance supervisor. When the supervisor answered, he said: "This is police business. How long would it

take you to give me a list of long-distance calls made from this number within the past three days?"

"Who's calling, please?"

Halstead told the girl his name, only he put "*Inspector*" before it, and said he was from the District.

"Can I call you back in half an hour?" the supervisor asked.

"Call me at the Waldredge residence," Halstead advised. "It's very important."

**G**OING to the clothes-closet, he got down on his hands and knees and hauled out Carmen's shoes. From the back corner he pulled a pair of galoshes. He turned these over and looked at the soles. Red-brown mud on the edge of the soles, between the ribbing in the rubber, was dry but not old.

He began a search of the pockets of the several coats that hung there. A handkerchief, a lipstick and a book of matches comprised his reward. He turned away in disgust.

He was about to slam the door shut when a piece of paper in the bottom of a blue pump caught his melancholy eye. The pump was turned over on its side. He got the paper and frowned at it—a sales-slip from a Washington department store bearing yesterday's date. It covered the purchase of three pairs of stockings, expensive ones; the stockings were taken by the customer, and it was a cash transaction with no name or address on the slip.

Halstead put the slip in his pocket. Carmen had been in Washington yesterday. That might mean something, or it might mean nothing at all.

He gave the rest of the room a going-over. He looked into the wastebasket and under the edges of the hooked rugs, and under the twin beds. The shades were drawn; a book was open on a small table beside the chaise-longue. He looked at the book, then went into the bathroom. He had just heard the sound of a motor when Bob Carsleigh called to him from the foot of the stairs. He hurried out and looked down.

"A car's coming up the lane," Bob said breathlessly. "If it's somebody to see Carmen, or her maid coming back, or—"

Halstead came down the stairs two at a time. Bob had the front door ajar. The sounds were distinct under the gray pall.

"I guess we'd better not wait, either," Halstead muttered. "Unless my ears

aren't what they used to be, we're about to have company you don't want to see. Can we get to that path—"

The sound of the car in low gear stopped him.

"Out through here." Bob led the way to the back door. They hurried down the path to the garden.

The Sheriff's voice was distinct. "Henry, you go round an' look in the back. I'll knock. If you hear me yell, you try to get in back there."

Halstead made a dive for the concealing boxwood hedge. "How in the hell do you suppose—" He didn't finish. He crouched, and saw Henry come in sight and hesitate before the back door. Then he heard the brass knocker on the front.

"Maybe somebody knows you came over here," Halstead growled. "Somebody wanted the Sheriff to find you here."

Halstead returned to Waldredge Hall alone, and Marie said that a mysterious male voice had called on the phone and had summoned the Sheriff to Carmen's house. The call had been answered by Adam; Marie had tried desperately to get some word of warning to Halstead, but had had no opportunity.

"You didn't leave Bob there?" Marie demanded.

"I've got him hidden. He's just retained me. Did the Sheriff leave any of his men here? I've got to look over the grounds—"

"Dave's on guard. I've shot some pictures around the arbor and shed. And oh, yes! I've seen Miss Victoria, and she understands that husband and wife can work together and—"

**S**HE broke off as Halstead grabbed the ringing phone. It was the long-distance supervisor.

"Two long-distance calls from the Carsleigh residence on Monday, Inspector," the supervisor said. "One on Tuesday. Do you wish numbers and name?"

"If you've got 'em."

"The first Monday call was made to Theodore Wickland, Washington attorney, Inspector. The second was to Mr. Thomas Gisbon, person-to-person."

Halstead bit off his words. "How about Tuesday?"

"Also person-to-person, to Mr. Gisbon. Then here's another, made at eleven-fifty last night—station-to-station." She gave Halstead the number.

"What time was the call on Tuesday to Gisbon?"

"At eleven-o-three A.M. It was completed at eleven-o-nine. Six minutes in all."

Halstead's eyes narrowed. "And Monday, the calls?"

"The call to Mr. Wickland—"

"Was that person-to-person?"

"Yes. It was one-seventeen P.M. to one-twenty-five. The one to Mr. Gisbon followed immediately. The time was one-thirty-one to one-thirty-seven."

"Another six-minute talk."

"Yes."

"Let me have the local operator."

While he waited, Marie said: "Don't hold out on me. What's—"

But the local operator came in, and Halstead asked for the telegraph office.

**T**HE young lady who answered was the telegraph manager. In reply to Halstead's question she remembered the telegram from Washington to Mr. Gisbon, and she herself read the message to him over the telephone at five-fifty-two the previous afternoon; she had then wished Mr. Gisbon, whose voice she knew well, much happiness.

There was perspiration on Halstead's palms when he got the telephone supervisor once again and found out that the telegraph company's call checked with the telephone company's record.

"Did anybody at the Waldredge house make a call right after that?" he demanded.

"Somebody called the Carsleigh house number," the supervisor answered. "I remember it, because I was on the board myself, and it was a long time before the Carsleigh residence answered."

Marie's face sobered as Halstead told her about the calls, and about Gisbon's getting her telegram.

"Carmen's call to Wickland—" Marie said pensively. "This gets worse. Wickland has a man shadow our office, another man take Lucy Starford away from our office. I've got an idea how we can find the answer."

He shook his head. "How?"

"Give Pinky a ring. Maybe Pinky could get a couple of pals. If he could get hold of the man in the brown overcoat—" She lowered her left eyelid.

Halstead said, "You call him. I'm going up to see Joel."

Joel didn't want to be seen. He was sitting up in a chair with his breakfast tray almost untouched on the small table beside him. He was surly and sullen, and his eyes were still feverish. Halstead





mumbled an apology and stood waiting until the maid, who was patting the bed's pillows in place under the roll of the spread over them, left the room.

Then Halstead took a cigarette from the table and lit it. He held the box to Joel and tried his wistful smile.

"They're allowed in here, aren't they?" Halstead asked.

"Smoke if you like. I've got a bad taste in my mouth."

"We were interrupted last night," Halstead said as he slumped in a chair.

Joel Starford didn't say anything. He leaned back and closed his eyes.

"You heard about Carmen—this morning?" Halstead ventured.

"Yes! God, yes!"

"Who told you?"

"Lucy. Does it matter?"

"You knew there was something between Carmen and Gisbon?"

The feverish eyes snapped open like the eyes of a sleeping doll when the doll is suddenly raised. "Just what are you driving at?"

"Several things," Halstead answered. "How about answering my question?"

"I don't believe Carmen Carsleigh even met Gisbon."

"Well, tell me this, Starford. Tuesday morning—yesterday—you saw Carmen yesterday morning between ten and eleven o'clock."

"I don't see what that's got to do with this—with Carmen—"

"You went over to Carmen's house," Halstead insisted. "Why?"

"Listen, Halstead, or whatever your name is, I'm suffering enough without you trying to make it tougher. Understand? I don't want to answer questions."

"Well, I can't make you," Halstead said apologetically. "And I don't want you to have to suffer. But your sister and your best friend—they're both in a bad spot. And that Sheriff's nobody to fool with. He'll probably have Lucy and Bob in the can before night. He—"

"He's got nothing on them," Joel retorted with vehemence. "He's got nothing on anybody. He can't arrest people without evidence."

Halstead studied the glow on the tip of his cigarette. He said: "Bob Cars-

leigh told me how things started out between you and Carmen."

"That was kind of him."

"What you went over to see her about yesterday morning between ten and eleven—that might be pretty important."

"I have nothing to say about it. Please get out. I'm tired."

Halstead didn't get up. He said: "You didn't happen to be anywhere in the passage downstairs at ten to six last night when Gisbon got a telephone-call—and possibly made one?"

FOR a fleeting moment Halstead was sure that he'd startled Joel Starford. Joel said: "I don't know where I was at ten to six. I didn't hear Gisbon make any telephone-calls. Possibly I heard the phone ring. I don't know."

"You know whether you called Carmen about that time, yourself?"

"I didn't call her."

"It's no secret that you hated Gisbon. Something to do with some sort of investment he got you into and cost you a lot of dough."

"How'd you know that?"

"Last night your Aunt Drusilla made the crack downstairs that Gisbon was a thief, a liar and a cheat—that he should have been killed."

"Aunt Dru?"

"She said it as if she'd been brooding about it for a good long time. I thought maybe it was because of the deal you were in, whatever it was."

"She was in it too," Joel said. "Aunt Dru and my mother were twins. They had a considerable fortune left to them by their grandfather, who ignored the other two sisters—Victoria and Alberta. The twins shared it equally. When my mother was killed, her share of the money went to Lucy and myself. Gisbon handled all the family financial matters—Victoria's investments and some of Alberta's. He'd made money for them. So when he suggested a winner in those boom days of 1928 that I could get in on, a new promotion in aviation, I assumed he knew what he was talking about. And Aunt Dru and I got on the bandwagon, and when the crash came, we were just about cleaned. The Federal Government looked into the outfit and pronounced it a swindle, and indicted a bunch of people and sent them to Atlanta. Gisbon was the innocent broker, and the suckers he'd let into the thing—well, nobody can ever tell me that he didn't know it was a fraud right from

the beginning. And he got his cut of the sucker money. You can bet on that."

"He got others in the thing besides your aunt and you?"

"Plenty of others. And his cut probably was a third. Gisbon was one for the money—out for the money—every time."

"One for the money," Halstead muttered. Thoughtfully, he said: "I wonder if he was making a play for your sister on account of her money."

"Lucy, in her own right, is worth about three hundred thousand—worth more than all the rest of this decaying family put together."

"And maybe somebody didn't want him to get her money?" Halstead looked at Joel curiously. "That's a new motive! You can gimme a lift here: Who, besides yourself, might not want to see Gisbon get Lucy because of her money?"

"That's absurd. None of us—"

"This aunt of yours—Victoria—she looks like the thinker for the family—How much had she to do with arranging Lucy's marriage?"

"Plenty, I imagine. Victoria's been fond of Gisbon for years and years. Gisbon came of an old family—one of the first settlers here. Victoria's full of family and family tradition, and Gisbon, to give the devil his full due, had a way with women. I wasn't here at the time Carsleigh and Lucy sort of broke up and Carsleigh went away, but I'm pretty sure that Gisbon didn't lose any time."

"SHE was going to marry Gisbon, but she didn't love him," Halstead said contemplatively over his cigarette. "She doesn't look like a person who'd be spiteful. I mean, she wouldn't marry Gisbon just because she figured Bob Carsleigh had done her wrong by marrying that girl in New Orleans."

"No, Lucy wouldn't do that. I think she liked Gisbon, even if it wasn't the real thing."

"Lucy didn't have a lot of boys to pick from, I take it."

"Eligible men in this section are scarce," Joel agreed. "And the life she's led here among these old maids since she was ten—"

"Lucy didn't mention her mother to me. You came here to live when your mother died?"

"Yes. As I said, my mother was a twin—Drusilla's twin. Victoria probably would have made an old maid of her, like the rest of them, only my mother

was full of fire. Red-haired like Lucy. She ran away with my father. It was a scandal. And I suppose my father was a pretty worthless sort. He just disappeared one day when I was twelve. Nobody ever heard of him again. We don't know to this day whether he's dead or not. Mother was killed in an automobile accident. Up to that time, we'd never seen any of our aunts or knew very much about Waldredge Hall. Victoria came to the funeral and made arrangements to take Lucy and me over. But I had a chance to get away more than Lucy. I went to college. Lucy didn't. Then I got into business—selling chemical supplies. I liked selling. I had a job in Washington."

"After you'd lost most of your fortune in this aviation thing," Halstead asked quietly, "what'd you do?"

"I had to go to work in earnest, then. I wouldn't ask Lucy for anything, though more than once she'd offered to set me up in business independently. I got into the real-estate business, but with the depression, and a series of bad guesses, I just about went on the rocks. Then I had a spell of sickness, and Lucy begged me to come here to rest up. I came back to find Lucy all set for her wedding."

Halstead got up and walked to the west windows. The trees were bare and ghostly through the gray pall.

"One for the money!" he mumbled to himself. Then he turned suddenly. "You wouldn't know if Gisbon's been under financial stress of late?"

"No. I wouldn't know that. Gisbon was a man to keep up a front. Everything in the grand manner. He could be flat, but no one in the world would guess."

Halstead stood in front of his chair. "You still haven't told me what you went to see Carmen about yesterday, between ten and eleven!"

"I never said I went to see her," Joel answered. Halstead didn't miss his quick change of expression, the abrupt hardening of the lines around his thin mouth.

"That's right, you didn't."

## Chapter Nine

THE reporter from the Carverdale *Herald*, who was also correspondent for the wire associations, was all that Halstead had to deal with in the way of the press. He knew, however, that the Washington and Baltimore boys would be



along later, and would probably camp on the grounds waiting for developments.

Halstead slipped out the back way and went slowly along the flagstones to the tool-house. He was dreading the moment the Sheriff's car would return from the Carsleigh house. And he was wishing that he'd grabbed up some of those canceled checks that he'd found in Carmen's bedroom. If this murder was one for the money, it wouldn't do to overlook checks and bank-statements.

The tool-shed was opened now, and the bloodstains were still on the floor. Halstead went in and looked around.

The shed stood to the right of the arbor which covered the walk from the kitchen porch. The arbor continued on for a few feet and ended where the flagstones left off and the old carriage-yard spread out. The arbor, covered thickly with dormant grape-vines, was constructed of strong upright poles on either side of the walk, with a lattice overhead.

He left the arbor and stood in the gravel carriage-yard. Across the yard was the stable, and adjoining that the carriage-shed had been remodeled into a garage that housed five cars. A huge sycamore tree stood a little to the left of the arbor, and its branches hung almost down to the arbor's top. Halstead went over to the soft earth beneath the tree. It had been badly trampled. The color was a kind of red-brown, the same clay that had dried on the galoshes in Carmen's closet.

He found himself wishing that he could get back to Washington for just a few hours, long enough to corner Theodore Wickland, the lawyer, and make that fellow say a few words. Why had Carmen Carsleigh called Wickland the day before the night of the murder? Why had Carmen called Tom Gisbon immediately after she had talked to Wickland?

He kicked at a reddish stone on the edge of the grass. Then he heard a soft footstep behind him, and a voice said: "Oh, there you are! I've been trying to find you."

**I**T was Alberta Waldredge, with the thin pointed face. She wore a raincoat open at the throat to reveal a fussy ruffled shirtwaist. She held her cat in her arms.

Halstead said: "Good morning."

Alberta said: "If you can call the fog good, and the shadow of death, and—death is only a shadow, isn't it, Mr. Halstead?"

Halstead's wistful smile and his gesture were vastly expressive. He nodded.

Alberta said: "Mr. Mordell, one of the gentlemen in the house, said you were wonderful, Mr. Halstead."

"How—wonderful?" She was trying to tell him something. Trying to lead up—

"I heard him tell Mr. Goldrick that you only looked sad. That you really had a very keen mind, and were well thought of in your field." She smiled and touched her hair, which had been frizzed too much. "That's why I should like very much to have you help me in this matter."

"Why do you need help?" Halstead rubbed his nose fervently. "You didn't kill Gisbon, did you?"

"Oh, my goodness, no! I couldn't kill anything. Not even a bird!"

**"M**AYBE you know who did kill Gisbon," Halstead offered. The water dripped from the sycamore tree onto his hat. He moved a foot.

"Oh, my goodness, no! If I did, I'd run right away and tell you. Poor Mr. Gisbon! He was such a lovely man, Mr. Halstead. So kind and considerate. He actually was, even though Mr. Goldrick and Drusilla and Cousin Oliver all thought him something else."

"What'd they think of him?" Halstead asked casually.

"Oh, my gracious, Mr. Halstead! You heard what Drusilla said last night? You must have! She blurted it right out—"

"I heard that. But Goldrick, and your cousin—they didn't say anything."

"They didn't? You should have heard them! I heard them—just like a little mouse, I heard them in the smoking-room. Mr. Goldrick drinks, you know."

"What did Goldrick say last night before supper?"

"He said the wedding ought to be stopped. He said Lucy was too fine and sweet to waste herself on a man like Mr. Gisbon. Imagine anybody saying that! Then Drusilla had to put in her nickel's worth," Alberta went on indignantly. "She had to say she'd stop the wedding if she knew how. That Mr. Gisbon was only marrying Lucy because Lucy had all that money."

"How terrible, Miss Waldredge!"

"Wasn't it, though? Saying that about the poor man when he'd spared no expense to make it a wedding to remember. And he was so happy about everything, Mr. Halstead. So good to Lucy. So considerate of her every wish."

"What'd your cousin say to that, your cousin Oliver?"

"I never was so surprised in my life, Mr. Halstead. I always thought Oliver was devoted to Thomas. But he said he had a mind to go to Lucy and tell her what he knew. He said he was sure that Lucy would listen, and call everything off and— But that isn't what I wanted you to help me with at all."

"I mightn't be much good, Miss Waldredge. If it's something—"

"It's about Joel, Mr. Halstead. Dear Joel! He's got that same sullen streak that Drusilla has. He fights away from people. And I'm so worried about him. You could tell, couldn't you, Mr. Halstead, whether Thomas was killed by a blow from an ax?"

Halstead's Adam's-apple bobbed. He glanced along the flagstones toward the house.

He said: "It's hard to tell what hit Gisbon. It might have been a sledgehammer, an iron bar, an ordinary carpenter's hammer, or it might've been an ax."

"But you mean you can't really be sure that it was an ax, Mr. Halstead?"

"Not really sure," he answered.

"Then I feel much better, Mr. Halstead. I wouldn't want to see anything in the world happen to poor Joel. Even though he is headstrong, I can't imagine him wanting to do away with even his worst enemy. He's so like his father. His father was sullen and headstrong—and really brutal. Yes, Mr. Halstead, John Starford was a very brutal person. He led Prudence—that was Joel's mother and Drusilla's twin, Mr. Halstead—he led poor Prudence through just about everything. And he was one for the money, too. Only Prudence was wise. She never let him get her money. And when he saw he couldn't, he just vanished. Joel looks like him and talks like him. Joel's a little handsomer, Mr. Halstead. But I don't think Joel's really bad. I really don't."

"What made you mention the ax, Miss Waldredge?" Halstead asked quietly.

"Oh, I just wondered. Nothing in particular. I just—"

"Alberta!"

**H**ALSTEAD jumped inside his skin, although he didn't show it outside. He hadn't heard Victoria Waldredge come up behind him.

Alberta said: "Oh, Vicky, I was just telling Mr. Halstead—"

"Mr. Halstead has too much on his mind to listen to you rattle on and on," the adamant woman interrupted, and Halstead was sure she'd heard everything Alberta had been saying. She moved toward the house and took her sister's arm. Alberta went reluctantly.

Halstead said: "I was about to ask Miss Alberta if she was in her room between eight and nine last night. Her windows were open; I thought she might have heard—"

"I was knitting, Mr. Halstead, but all I heard was the drip of water."

"No shower on that porch roof outside your windows? No hard shower?"

"No, Mr. Halstead." She moved on then, with Victoria guiding her.

Halstead followed in a few minutes. He would have given anything to know why Alberta had brought up the question of the ax, and what she was driving at by her mention of Joel.

**W**ILLIS GRINSBY was in the library alone when Halstead entered it. The trim, well-tailored man looked drawn and pale, but forced a smile. He said: "This thing gets worse, Halstead. Sit down. Tell me if there's any progress. I don't know when I've had anything hit me the way this has."

"I can imagine," Halstead replied, after a pause, "just how cut-up you must feel about this."

"I wish we didn't even have to mention it, Halstead. Poor Tom, struck down in that fog like a poled ox! On the eve of the greatest day in his life."

"You saw Tom in the office yesterday, didn't you?" Halstead asked.

"In the morning. We were both in all morning."

"You wouldn't happen to know if he got a telephone-call around eleven or a little after, that kind of upset him?"

"Let me think." Grinsby frowned in contemplation, put down the paper and stared at the empty fireplace. Then he looked up at Halstead abruptly. "This might mean something." He narrowed one eye as if to help his memory. "He suddenly called off a luncheon appointment he had with me; he seemed upset."

"You don't know where he went for his lunch, then."

"No. I kept the appointment with the customer. He left the office about a quarter past twelve, and I didn't see him again. He'd told me that he'd be up here early, and that I should come up as soon as I could get away."



Halstead sat on the arm of a chair, and said: "You wouldn't know whether Tom's been hard pressed for cash lately?"

"Good Lord, Halstead. What makes you ask a thing like that?"

"It's just an angle. I—"

"It's a cockeyed angle. Tom pressed for cash! You probably didn't know him very well, or you'd've known that Tom was always one to look out for Tom—first." Then, sitting up suddenly: "I don't quite get it, Halstead. What could being up against it for cash have to do with somebody brutally killing him?"

"Your guess is as good as mine, Grinsby. When was it that Tom met Bob Carsleigh's wife?"

THERE was a moment of silence. Grinsby drummed his fingers on the arm of his chair. He said: "I'm going to tell you something, Halstead. For God's sake never let on to Lucy, will you? Don't tell anybody unless you have to."

"What's that?"

"When you know a person—are close to a person, as I was to Tom, you can feel things sometimes that you can't quite explain. For a month back, I'd felt that something was decidedly wrong with Tom, something preying on his mind. Nothing to do with money, but maybe something else."

"A woman." Halstead's eyes were moist. "Where'd he meet Carmen?"

"I don't know."

"But you knew he saw her secretly."

"I discovered it by accident," Grinsby said. "There's a roadhouse on the highway to Frederick—one of those intimate places where you can have a private dining-room if you want it. I'd been out there to dinner with a friend—a young dancer I'm rather fond of."

"You're not married?"

"Not yet," Grinsby answered.

"You were at the roadhouse with a dancer. Go on."

"It was an extremely rainy night. I'd asked Tom that afternoon if he'd care to come along and make a party of four. I told him I had a date with this girl, and she could get a friend, and we could have a rather nice evening together. He told me he couldn't make it, because of a dinner engagement with one of his customers. I went out to the roadhouse with my friend—we'd decided on it at the last minute; and just as we were going out to the parking-lot, at about eight-thirty, I heard a door slam and I heard Tom's voice. A moment later I

saw him plainly in the light from the side windows. He was with this very attractive woman. I didn't know who she was."

"You didn't call to him, or—"

"No. I got into my car and went on. The next day I thought he might mention her, so I led with the fact that Diana and I had been to the roadhouse, early. He merely asked if the music had been good. He said nothing of his date. A few days later I was going into his office on a business matter just as I heard him say 'Carmen' to somebody on the telephone. His back was to me, and I started to withdraw. Then I heard him say: 'But we can be discreet, my dear. Your husband doesn't need to know everything.' I withdrew rapidly, because I knew Bob Carsleigh, and I knew that he had a very beautiful wife named Carmen, and I was certain that the woman I'd seen Tom escort into the roadhouse was the same person."

"Tom never mentioned her name to you—never at all?"

"Never. I never let on to him that I knew about that night. I thought it was his business if he wanted to play a little."

"Would it be possible that Carsleigh knew about this?"

"I don't know, but I don't think so. Carsleigh was too anxious to get something on his wife that would let him divorce her. And if he could've found something that would not only involve his wife but the man who was going to marry the girl he himself wanted—well, Halstead, you know what he'd do."

"If he got the chance," Halstead agreed.

"I wouldn't overlook Carsleigh," Grinsby suggested.

"I won't. I won't overlook anybody, and I know the Sheriff won't. Tom was socked between the eyes with a blunt instrument, and Tom's gun killed Carmen Carsleigh—"

"What are you saying, Halstead?" Grinsby came erect, his fingers gripping the chair-arm. "What—"

"Tom's gun killed Carmen," Halstead said sadly. "Right over the left eye. I can't swear it was Tom's gun, but I've got a hunch. He had a gun, you know."

"I didn't know that!" Grinsby's face was pale. "Don't tell me that Tom killed her, and then—but he couldn't have committed suicide."

"No, that's right. He couldn't have. And he didn't kill Carmen. She died about three hours after he did. I thought you knew."

"God, no!"

"There's the Sheriff's car now," Halstead said suddenly. "Sounds like a concrete-mixer. We'll all probably catch hell. See you later."

Halstead left abruptly, passed along to the stairs, took them two at a time.

He was out of breath when he reached the door to his quarters. He knocked softly, tried the knob. The door was locked.

After a long pause during which the hall below was suddenly filled with voices, there was the sound of footsteps, and then Marie opened the door.

"You look as if something's after you," Marie said cheerily. "See a ghost?"

"Where's Lucy?"

"She's in there." A nod toward the sitting-room. "Where she'll be safe."

"Nobody'll be safe from now on. I know guys like Lucas. He's out for blood. He's out to hang somebody. He might even try it on me."

"I hope Alberta keeps her mouth shut about the ax," Marie said.

"What do you know about the ax?" Halstead stood frozen. "Alberta's been talking to you—"

"Oh, no, Arthur. And I haven't been talking to Alberta. But I *have* been looking around a little."

"You've been prowling in other people's rooms again."

"No, it was in the attic this time, I saw Alberta sneaking up the attic stairs. I thought I ought to take a look. I did."

"You saw the ax."

"I saw Alberta hiding the ax under a lot of plunder. Very carefully."

"She didn't see you?"

"I like that! What sort of detective do you think I am?"

## Chapter Ten

HALSTEAD was right about Sheriff Lucas. He was out to get Bob Carsleigh, dead or alive, and had ordered the State police to broadcast a description and cover every road and rail line, search trains and busses. The Sheriff had found Gisbon's car in a wooded lane that led to a field on Carsleigh's own property. The Sheriff's theory was that Carsleigh had slugged Gisbon, had taken Gisbon's car, gone to his own house, killed his wife and then had come back to take away the Starford girl when Dave, the deputy, had tried to stop him and had been attacked.



When Halstead innocently said that Bob Carsleigh had retained him, Sheriff Lucas hit the ceiling.

"What kinda racket you runnin?" the Sheriff demanded. "Miss Waldredge, then this feller Grinsby, an' now you say Carsleigh's retained—say! You seen him?"

"He called me on the phone—this morning."

"You know where he is?"

"Not right now," Halstead lied quietly.

"I can take you in for hidin' a witness an' obstructin' justice an'—"

"No, and I think you got better sense than to try to take me in. If you want to coöperate with me and work together with me on this thing—"

"I told you last night I didn't want any help, didn't need an' wasn't askin' for any. That still goes. An' if I just catch you once doin' somethin'—"

"You hear that, Mister?" Halstead turned suddenly to the reporter who'd been standing against the wall, taking it all in with an amused smile.

"I didn't miss it," the reporter said.

"That's all I want," Halstead said. "A witness. You don't want any coöperation, Sheriff. You won't get any. Not from me. Make a note of that, reporter. You can even quote me if you want to. You can say Bob Carsleigh didn't kill Gisbon."

"Oh, boy!" the reporter's eyes brightened. "You know, Mr. Halstead, who might've done it?"

"I've got a fair idea," Halstead answered. "Yeh, you can say that too. You can even say that the next twenty-four hours ought to bring things to a head."

"Listen, Halstead, if you've got something—"

"You don't want any help, Sheriff. Don't forget that."

Halstead strode away with the Sheriff's eyes fixed on the back of his neck. . . .

Luncheon was a dull affair during which all the guests were too obviously trying to be cheerful and refrain from mention of the murders. Halstead sat opposite Marie and gave her a sign with his eyes when finally the meal was over.

She hung back at the door, and Halstead whispered: "Get Lucy out of the house while I steer the Sheriff's men into the smoking-room. Get her down to the



barn. Just strolling around. Keep her with you until I find you."

George Mordell's stories and some good cigars took care of the deputies, made them relax. The Sheriff had gone home for his noonday dinner. Nobody apparently noticed when Halstead slipped out of the room.

He found the two girls admiring an antique sleigh at the carriage-shed. They turned, startled. He passed the carriage-shed and beckoned to them to follow.

**B**ACK of the barn, Halstead opened a door while Marie slipped away.

"What is this?" Lucy asked, her voice low. "I don't—"

"I want you and Bob to talk a little," Halstead answered. He held the door, but Lucy looked frightened, hesitant.

"I've nothing to say to Bob."

"I don't like to dispute you, Miss Starford, but you've got a lot to say. Hurry, before someone comes."

He led the way up the dark stairs after securing the door from the inside. Bob Carsleigh, a dim shadow in the heavy gloom, let them into a tight apartment that once had been the quarters of a groom. He said, "Lucy!" And reached to her and took her fingers.

Halstead said: "We've got to make this fast and sweet. Bob, last night you sat in the woods in your car where you could see Lucy's room, but you said you didn't see Lucy."

"Yes."

He turned to the girl. "You left the house sometime after the dressmaker who gave you a fitting, went home."

Lucy stared at him through a long pause. "Who told you—"

"You went out," Halstead broke in. "What time?"

"I don't know what time it was."

"You didn't go out to meet this guy?"

"I certainly did not."

"What'd you go out for?"

Again that hesitant pause. Then: "To get some air. To think about—things."

"Look, Miss Starford: Yesterday afternoon you came to Washington in a panic—insisting upon seeing me before your aunt could see me. Why? Because you were deathly afraid of something your aunt might say or do. You'd found out about Carmen Carsleigh and Tom Gisbon," Halstead said. "Isn't that it?"

"Yes—that's it." Lucy's voice was dull.

"How'd you find out?"

"Drusilla told me. I refused to believe it. I knew how Drusilla, like Joel, hated

the very ground Tom walked on. Drusilla said she'd seen him over there. She'd seen him go in, and she'd seen a light in Carmen's room, and she hadn't seen Tom come out again. I told her she was lying. We had a bitter scene about it. She said she'd tell Victoria. Victoria ought to know about it!"

"You wouldn't believe it, but it rankled inside," Halstead said sadly.

"It kept coming into my mind," Lucy admitted. "Once I'd overheard Drusilla and Oliver Grayne discussing Tom's courtship with me. Oliver said something about Tom being a rotter. That kept coming up in my mind too. But I kept denying it. No one could have been kinder to me than Tom, or more considerate, and I tried to convince myself that—that it wasn't true."

"But you found out it was true," Halstead urged.

"Yes."

"When?" He leaned forward tensely.

"Last night, just before dinner. I was on the stairs, just at the landing, when the telephone rang. Tom was in the lower hall. He answered it immediately. I heard him say: 'Yes, this is Mr. Gisbon. Read me the telegram.' Like that. I don't know why I didn't keep on coming down the stairs. I did start when I heard him click the receiver, then call the Carsleighs' number." She broke off, and tears spilled over.

Bob said: "I wish now I'd killed him myself. I wish—"

**"S**HUT up," said Halstead. Then to Lucy: "You heard him call?"

"I heard him lower his voice. I heard him say, 'Darling,' very tenderly. I almost fainted. Then I heard him say: 'It's quite all right. I'm alone!' And after a minute he said: 'I'm supposed to meet the 9:17 train; so we can have about an hour, and after that—'"

Her shoulders moved convulsively, and a sob shook her.

"What'd you do then?"

"I ran back to my room. I couldn't believe what I'd heard. I—I wanted to die. Right there."

"But you came down to dinner with the rest."

"Finally I did. Yes."

"So what you really came to my office for yesterday, or tried to see me about, was to find out if Drusilla had actually told Victoria about Tom Gisbon and Carmen; to find out if Victoria's hurried trip to see me was to have me scout out

and see if Gisbon's affair with Carmen was really true."

"That was it—yes. And when I finally got to talk to you, and you told me what you did, I felt reassured. When you told me that Tom wanted you as a guest to see that everything went off all right, I felt as if all my fears had been groundless. I was happy again when I drove back here. But last night on the stairs—"

She got up and went to the small square window overlooking the far end of the garden.

"So after dinner last night," Halstead said presently, "you went out. You hurried into the fog. . . . Why?"

"It wasn't until after Tom had left," Lucy replied. "I don't know exactly how long. I wanted to get away—from everything. The thought kept coming to me that it was all a hideous nightmare. I walked aimlessly in the fog—a long, long time. Then I got chilled and started back for the house, and I had the strangest feeling that something was there in the fog behind me. I could hear movement. Once I thought I heard a metallic sound, like the scrape of metal on a stone.

"I started to run. I almost ran into a car, a strange coupé in the drive. I looked in at the side door and saw somebody in the hall, so I went around to the front to let myself in."

"And went right up to your room?"

"Yes."

"And didn't leave until—"

"I heard the cat screaming. My nerves were jumpy, I suppose. It struck a queer kind of terror through me. I went to the hall and listened, but I couldn't make out anything further. I was getting ready for a shower when Aunt Victoria came and told me she had tragic news for me. Then she told me that you'd come, and had just found Tom's—body."

"You should've fainted on that," Halstead said. "With relief!"

"I got ready to come down when the Sheriff arrived," Lucy answered. "I was frightened almost speechless at those men, and the way that Lucas asked questions—"

"While up in your room Bob Carsleigh was waiting for you," Halstead broke in with a kind of grimness. "Well, here he is now. With all this off your chest, maybe you'll feel better. As for him—well, it makes it all the worse. Sooner or later somebody's going to tell Lucas about Gisbon making a play for Mrs. Carsleigh,

and that'll just about seal it. Meanwhile, Lucy, maybe you better just break down and cry on his shoulder."

"I don't want to cry on his shoulder."

Halstead wouldn't dispute a lady, but he knew that was exactly what she did the minute he started down the stairway.

THE curious movements of Oliver Grayne in and about the carriage-yard halted Halstead as he emerged from the end of the barn. Then when Grayne hurriedly went to the tool-shed, Halstead's eyes narrowed.

He approached soundlessly and as he listened, he heard Grayne pawing over the things on the work-bench. Halstead peered through the partly opened door and said casually:

"I looked those things over. It wasn't any of them."

Oliver Grayne choked, turned red.

"Oh—ah—Halstead." His voice was fuzzy. "Puzzling, Halstead. Tom six feet three, powerful man. Can't understand how anybody could hit him like that with him looking right at—"

"Did you hit him?"

Oliver Grayne went pale. He blinked at Halstead. "Me? I?"

"You didn't like Gisbon."

"Ridiculous, Halstead. I—"

"It isn't ridiculous. It's perfectly natural. You thought a lot of your cousin Lucy. When you found out about Gisbon, and his affair with Carmen—"

"I never heard—"

"You not only heard; you saw," Halstead cut in mercilessly. "Everybody here wants to lie about this case."

"Halstead, I've nothing to say. Nothing to hide. Tom Gisbon was my friend of long years standing. Hunted together, fished—"

"You and Drusilla Waldredge had your heads together on what to do about this situation. How're you going to explain to Elam the crack you made about Gisbon being a rotter, and something ought to be done to keep Lucy from throwing herself away on the man?"

"Drusilla told you, Halstead?" Grayne's query was a hoarse whisper.

"Confession's good for the soul," Halstead retorted. "That's what they tell me. How about confessing?"

"But there's nothing to—confess."

"What's going on in here?"

Elam Lucas, thin and nasal, shadowed the doorway. There was something gloating in his pale eyes, in the way he wrinkled that ugly nose. He said, "Into



the house, you two," and jerked his head as he stood back to let them pass.

Dave, the deputy with the tooth out, was dangling one foot as he perched on the library table. Drusilla Waldredge sat in a straight chair with her eyes on the floor. She didn't look up when Grayne entered with Halstead at his heels. Another deputy, a gaunt, stubbly-bearded man, leaned against the mantel. A stranger whom Halstead hadn't seen before, with glasses that made him look owlsh, a beak of a nose and thin hands that he rubbed together, stood in front of Drusilla.

"MR. KITTERING," said Elam Lucas. "State's Attorney's office."

Halstead nodded.

Kittering took off his glasses and polished them. He squinted at Halstead while he did it. He said: "So you're the man that cracked the tangle down at Cannisford—the case of the minister who had looked upon the flesh."

"And saw that it was pink," Halstead answered sorrowfully.

Kittering cocked his head to one side and replaced his glasses.

"Just who hired you to come here, and when and what for?" he demanded.

"You're wasting time if you think I'm going to tell you," Halstead retorted.

"So that's your attitude," Kittering said. His smile was thin and ominous.

"We can lock him up," Lucas said.

"You gentlemen," Halstead rejoined in the tone of a country preacher giving a benediction, "can politely go to hell."

"This won't get you anywhere, Halstead," Kittering spat.

"I don't want to get anywhere. Your Sheriff's doing all right. I offered to coöperate with him, and he said he didn't want any coöperation. He's a little dull-witted, but he can't help it. Last night he tried to force his way into my wife's sitting-room where she was undressing, and I had to stop him. If he wants a little more of the same now—well, here I am."

Kittering turned to Oliver. "Is this man Halstead a friend of the family's?"

"I know nothing about him," Oliver answered righteously.

"Why do you stand there and lie, Oliver?" Drusilla's question in that dead monotone shocked the room into momentary silence.

"Oh, so he's lying!" Kittering said. His expression was that of a feline getting set to pounce.

"What're we doing in here?" Halstead demanded. "What inquisition—"

"We are about to make an arrest, Halstead," Kittering replied. "Perhaps two. It might depend on you."

Oliver Grayne suddenly was panic-stricken. "You're not—going to arrest—"

"I'll do the talking, Grayne," Kittering broke in. "In the first place, you and this woman, Miss Drusilla Waldredge, suspected Thomas Gisbon of certain conduct that, in your opinions, made him unfit to marry Lucy Starford."

"It's a lie," Grayne shouted.

"It's no lie," Drusilla contradicted.

"Oliver Grayne," Kittering said, "yesterday afternoon, at about fifteen minutes after five o'clock, Thomas Gisbon drove up to your place. Is that true?"

"He stopped by. Yes."

"He stopped by because you telephoned him in Washington and asked him to?"

"I refuse to answer."

"All right, don't answer. The fact is, Grayne, you called Washington at ten minutes to twelve, a person-to-person call to Thomas Gisbon. I have that information from the telephone exchange. You talked to Gisbon, and so did the fugitive, Robert Carsleigh."

Halstead's pulses jumped.

"WHAT if I did?" Oliver Grayne demanded.

"Gisbon came to your house as he drove up from Washington. It was around a quarter after five. You have a man working on your place by the name of Taylor."

Oliver Grayne didn't answer.

"This man Taylor says that you and Gisbon had a quarrel—a word-battle over Lucy Starford. Will you tell me about it?"

"I refuse—"

"Tell him about it, Oliver. Don't be a fool," Drusilla said.

"Mr. Grayne, about this quarrel—" Kittering took his glasses off again and polished them. "It started on Sunday. The incident yesterday was a continuation. You quarreled with Gisbon because you wanted him to get out of his marriage to your cousin as gracefully as he could, and forget her."

"Yes," Oliver said weakly. "It was about Lucy."

"Now we're getting somewhere," Kittering crowed. "The quarrel was about Lucy Starford. What brought it on?"

"His going over to see Mrs. Carsleigh."

"That's what I thought," Kittering snapped. "Gisbon told you to mind your own business. Isn't that what he said?"

"Yes. Didn't act like himself. Snarling—like a dog. Denied he had anything to do with Carmen Carsleigh, until I told him that Drusilla had seen him go in there late at night—all that."

**K**ITTERING put his glasses on. "You knew of scrapes with women that Gisbon'd been in before?"

"I knew the women—they sort of fell for him. He'd had a number of affairs."

"With what kind of women?" Kittering put on his courtroom manner.

Grayne moistened his drab lips. "Lucy, I think, was the only nice girl he ever went around with. Picked 'em a little tough when he—well, you know—"

"I see. He liked that kind for an occasional fling."

"Yes."

"He never spent much money on these women," Kittering said. "Right?"

"He never spent money on anybody."

"To get back to this affair with Mrs. Carsleigh: You knew it was going on. You got afraid for Lucy. You quarreled with Gisbon on Sunday, and he told you to go to hell. Your man, Taylor, overheard that. Then yesterday afternoon you demanded a showdown. You told Gisbon he'd get out of this gracefully, or you'd see that he got out otherwise. You were so angry you were sick afterward."

"I didn't—"

"Gisbon again told you where to go. You came over here for dinner. You ate at the same table with him, all the time burning up with hate and indignation. At half-past eight you got up to leave, with Goldrick. He walked as far as the carriage-yard with you. You took the path there, and Goldrick got into his car. Only you didn't go directly home—you walked back to the house, made sure everything was all to your liking; then you met Robert Carsleigh in the woods. You told him the result of your talks with Gisbon—your quarrels. And the two of you—"

"You're crazy," shouted Grayne. "I never saw Bob Carsleigh. I—"

"The two of you lay in wait for Gisbon and killed him," Kittering finished triumphantly. "That's the State's case, Sheriff," he went on, looking at his watch. "I can get an indictment. When you find Carsleigh, you'll find that he shot his—"

"That's not much of a case," Halstead said solemnly.

"Halstead," Oliver Grayne shouted, "I'll pay you anything you ask if you—"

"Stay out of this, Halstead," Kittering had produced a typewritten sheet from his pocket. "If you'll sign this, Grayne, I'll promise to see that you get off as lightly—"

"I'll take the case," Halstead said without emotion. "What do you want my client to sign?"

And he looked at the paper over Kittering's shoulder. He got enough of the words in that one quick glance to see that it was a confession.

"Throw the paper into the fire, Oliver," Halstead said quickly. "Don't sign anything, and don't say anything. Let 'em throw you in the can. You won't stay long—no longer than it'll take for me to get Joe Weddemeyer down from Baltimore to—"

"You mean that criminal lawyer—"

"He'll make a monkey out of this fellow here," Halstead said glumly, nodding at Kittering.

"Halstead," Kittering cried, "you can't get away with this. I've heard of you getting away with other things, but so help me, there's nothing to prevent my throwing you in the can too; I can hold you twenty-four hours incommunicado. By that time—well, there won't be anything left for Weddemeyer to clean up. If you can't phone him, there's little—"

"Okay, State's Attorney," Halstead stalled. "Enjoy yourself."

**T**HE Sheriff snapped the bracelets on the twitching Oliver.

"Halstead, can't you do something? For God's sake, can't you—" Grayne looked at Halstead helplessly.

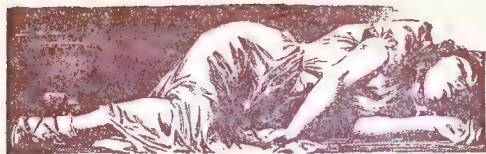
"You're bound to take me too?" Halstead turned to Kittering. "May I knock off a note to my office? You can read it. There's a desk. Just to give some instructions about a couple cases waiting on me." Halstead indicated the desk in the corner.

"Knock off a note," Kittering said triumphantly. "Tell 'em they'll hear from you sometime in the future."

Halstead sat at the desk with Kittering hovering over him. He began to scrawl at length, and wrote slowly. It took him three minutes. When he finished, he handed the note to Kittering.

Kittering said: "I'll mail it—tomorrow." He nudged Halstead's shoulders. "You can have him, Dave."





Halstead rose wearily. Dave came toward him with the air of a dog ready to grab a bone.

Halstead said: "Don't worry about Oliver, Miss Drusilla. We ought to be back for supper."

"He's optimistic," Kittering prodded. "Supper—a week from some Thursday. Once we get this Carsleigh in tow—"

They all stopped at the door.

Marie stood in the door-frame, and her eyes were dancing.

She said: "It's all okay, Arthur. Joe Weddemeyer says if he doesn't hear from you personally within the next ten minutes, he'll be at the Carverdale courthouse in an hour."

"Who are you?" Kittering demanded.

"Good," Halstead mumbled. "Nice work, Babe."

"I demand to know who's this Babe?" Kittering exploded. "What're you trying to do. Make a monkey—"

"The lady's his wife," Oliver Grayne gurgled.

"The lady does detecting also, plain and fancy," Marie cut in. "You don't suppose I'd allow you gentlemen to closet Arthur in here without being handy just in case—"

"We'll take her too," Lucas bellowed. "We can charge her—"

"Quiet," Kittering blurted. He stared at Marie, then smiled. "You win, Babe. For the moment." Then, to the Sheriff: "Come out here, Elam—you and Dave and Alfred."

The Sheriff and his deputies followed Kittering into the hall.

Marie whispered: "That was close. My heart's about to choke me."

Halstead said: "I saw you at the door. You got Joe Weddemeyer on the phone all right?"

"Lord, no. He's out of town. Won't be back until tomorrow!"

## Chapter Eleven

A SHORT session with Victoria Waldredge sent Halstead scurrying to the telephone. Miss Waldredge gave him a pretty complete report on the financial status of the family. He got Pinky Wil-

son at the office, and gave Pinky minute instructions to have Sergeant Lindom, of the district police, get into a certain safety-deposit box at the American National. Halstead wanted a list of everything in the box.

Pinky promised quick results. Halstead asked if he'd got anything more on Theodore Wickland.

"I got Heinie an' Elbert out to pick 'im up," Pinky answered. "I told 'em if they hadda push 'im around a little—"

"Call me back," Halstead said. He knew Pinky's "boys" Heinie and Elbert might push Wickland around plenty to find out things.

Halstead went up to George Mordell's room and knocked. He was worried about this State's Attorney.

Mordell called, "Come in," to Halstead's soft knock. Mordell was sitting in a deep chair with his unpressed trousers pulled at the knees, and socks wrinkled around his fat ankles. He squinted at Halstead, and his thick lips half smiled. "It's funny I never heard Tom Gisbon mention you."

"You said that last night," Halstead remarked.

"I've been thinking about it."

"You weren't his lawyer—maybe he didn't tell you everything."

"Lord, no! I've a little pork-and-bean practice in Baltimore. I'm one of those fellows who made headlines at college, and never made anything since. If you knew Tom Gisbon well, you know something plenty bad about me. You come clean. I can take it, see?"

"Tom didn't talk about his friends with me," Halstead countered. "I'm not in the habit of discussing a friend's confidences with others."

"You're a liar, Halstead," Mordell said as if talking to himself. "Either you're a liar, or you're a lot more clever actor than I thought."

Halstead raised his eyes to meet Mordell's searching scrutiny. He said: "You got a lot of bulk, Mordell. You could've swung on Tom—smashed his head in."

"I've been waiting for it," Mordell answered. "Can't figure why you've waited this long to accuse me. Especially if Tom told you what to look out for."

"Tom was a little upset," Halstead said. He had a hunch he was close to something.

"He had a right to be upset," Mordell answered promptly. "His hands on practically all this Waldredge fortune, and then the Creole honey—"

"Tom told you about Carmen?"

"I had to find out all about her myself. Carmen never knew it, God rest her soul; but if it hadn't been for her—"

Halstead got it; he said quietly: "You used her as a club. How much did you blackmail Tom for?"

"Now we're out in the open," Mordell said. "Now we understand each other. Tom hired you, Halstead, just to make sure that I didn't try to stop his grab."

"You mean his wedding."

"It amounts to the same thing."

"And you've got no alibi for the hour of the murder," Halstead mused. "The Sheriff won't have much mercy, Mordell. I can tell you that. Tell me about the blackmail."

"That's an ugly word for it. I don't like it."

"What's your word for it, then?"

"Retribution."

"You'd better give me your side of it," Halstead advised. He knew that if he let on for one second that he was shooting completely in the dark, no power on earth could drag another word from Mordell's thick lips.

Mordell's story went back to the airplane promotion in which Joel Starford had lost his fortune, along with Drusilla. Gisbon had painted a great picture, and Mordell had brought friends with money into the deal, had induced a cousin to take the chairmanship. Then had come the collapse; and the cousin, innocent of any wrong, had been sent to Atlanta, and Gisbon had come out of it clean with thirty per cent commission on all the money that had been poured in.

MORDELL had waited for years to get something on Gisbon and when he found out about Gisbon's affair with Carmen, he tried pressure. He went to Gisbon's office and made a flat demand for one hundred thousand to allow Gisbon's wedding to go through.

"What'd Gisbon say?" Halstead asked.

"He laughed at me, said if I was up against it, he'd loan me ten grand on my personal note. Took me out and bought a drink. I gave him until Sunday night."

"What happened when the deadline for your demand came?" Halstead asked.

"Tom was still trying to kid me out of it, but he was worried."

"You stayed on here," Halstead said, "and last night you slugged him."

"Why should I?" Mordell retorted. "He was worth something to me alive."

He dropped his feet to the floor and leaned forward. "Halstead, would it be worth something to you *not* to find the murderer?"

"Tom's right," Halstead said, rising. "You're crazy. But I'll say this for you: You're the only one that's been halfway honest with me—that hasn't tried to cover up. But wait a minute—you're trying to cover somebody too—that's right! You know who carried the ax up through the house."

Halstead's eyes were half closed. He didn't miss the pumping pulse in the fat neck, the momentary change in the eyes.

Mordell said: "So it was an ax that did the job." He didn't say anything else.

GOLDRICK was alone in the library with his broad back to the fireplace, card-table in front of him, and an empty glass on the table. He was playing solitaire and he grunted a greeting.

"Oliver just told me he had a narrow squeak," Goldrick said, "—that if it hadn't been for you, he and maybe Drusilla might be in jail."

"And probably you too."

"Me? Why?"

"All three of you were agreed on the fact that Lucy oughtn't to go through with her wedding. All three of you wanted it stopped. That's true, isn't it?"

"Not entirely," Goldrick answered. "As a matter of fact, I thought Oliver and his cousin were acting like a pair of asses over the whole thing. Personally, I never saw anything out of the way. I know Tom's ability with all the girls. Haven't I been out with him? But as for this Carsleigh business—well, I'll tell you the truth."

"I'm glad somebody wants to tell me the truth." Halstead settled on the sofa.

"Drusilla's a person that'll carry a spite to her grave," Goldrick said. "So is Oliver. Up until recently, nobody in the world could've been more friendly than Oliver and Tom. In fact, Tom loaned Oliver money to carry on some agricultural experiments when everybody else turned him down. But Oliver listened to that damned constant monotone of Drusilla's until slowly he began to turn against Tom."

"That begins to make the light change," Halstead mumbled.

"Drusilla started all this business about Tom and Carmen Carsleigh. All a lot of silliness. The day we were talking, I said that *if* these things were true—mind you, Halstead, I said that *if* Tom



had a case with this woman, and was chasing her right on the eve of his wedding, that they ought to talk to him about it."

"What's your opinion now, in the light of what's happened?"

"I don't know what to say. My guess is that Carsleigh himself, in desperation, killed Tom, and then killed his wife, and fled the country."

Halstead looked at the wide powerful shoulders under that expensive tweed. He couldn't help an involuntary shudder as he got up and went to the door.

AT half-past five the early March dusk died behind the ever-thickening fog. The hall lights were on, and a silence lay through the house. Halstead felt a small cool current in the upper hall as he crept stealthily on his way to the attic.

Marie Burton stood down in the hall and watched him. She said: "Go straight back toward the rear wall when you turn at the head of the stairs."

Halstead whispered: "You keep your eyes open. Don't worry about me. And shut that door."

She shut the door and remained in the second-floor passage.

He reached the top of the steps, turned on his pencil torch and played it ahead of him. He moved over a wide-plank floor, sent his beam across neatly stacked boxes and barrels. Then he slanted it and squinted at the floor, and saw the marks of the shoes on the thin dust. Only with a light held like this could you do that—so photographic lighting had taught him.

Straight to the back wall, the tracks led. There was a brick chimney, and by the chimney the stack of things Marie had told him to look for. He sent his light-beam over the entire pile, up one side and down the other.

"Between the picture-frames and the cartons somewhere," Marie had said. He again held the light at an angle. He moved the stack of frames out toward him so that he could get his hand up under the heavy moulding.

His fingers touched something cold and hard and sharp, and a shock went up to his shoulders. They closed over the head of an ax.

Very steadily Halstead pulled it out. He brought it into the beam of light and shuddered a little as he looked at it. The handle was short—the kind a man would choose for chopping in the woods; but the head was a three-and-a-half-pounder.

*The kind of ax a short, stocky man might use!*

Halstead waited for a moment, half-frozen in his tracks. He stared at the ax-handle. Then a scratch on the floor caught his eye, and he slanted the light around the bottom of the cartons. Abruptly he caught the corner of one carton and moved it, and the whole stack moved out toward him. His fingers were trembling when his torch-beam showed him a fresh nick in the pine planks—a spot where a board had been pried out.

Halstead tackled it with his fingers and couldn't budge it. Then he got the ax, and the blade fitted in the nick. He pried, and the plank came up and revealed a dark recess under the floor.

The light-beam picked out the mark on the plaster that ceiled the room below—a clean oblong that left the laths and plaster clear, while all around the area was dark with dust that had settled over it for long years. Halstead touched the dust-layer with his finger, looked at the smudge, slowly replaced the plank.

Carefully he pushed the cartons back. He wiped the ax-handle with his handkerchief, laid the ax on top of the cartons, then fited the pile of framed prints back the way he'd found them. They concealed the ax.

Who had crept up there with this ax at two o'clock yesterday morning? And had it been Adam who had stood in the hall below and watched that creeping shadow? Why did Alberta Waldredge steal up here just before lunch and hide the ax? What did she know about it, or about the person who carried it up here? And who had slipped into the house with it last night an hour or more after the murder of Gisbon? The questions whirled round and round in his mind.

HALSTEAD was halfway down the attic stairs when the door at the foot opened and Marie said, "Come down calmly and don't be in any hurry. From the turn things've taken now, we'll probably all spend the night in the Carverdale hoosegow."

He came down and closed the door and said: "The Sheriff's back?"

"That's complication number one. The Sheriff's back. He has Mr. Kittering with him. The two of them have Drusilla and Victoria and Alberta locked in the library. There's a deputy standing outside the door."

"What's number two?"

"Number two is a heck of a mess."

She turned into the passage that led to the rear.

"How come the back stairs?" Halstead paused when he saw her start down.

"Because I heard the Sheriff tell the deputy to find you and see that you stayed put. He might have some questions to ask you. And since that's the last thing you can do right now—"

"Why?"

"IT'S none of my doing, Arthur. But Pinky Wilson's down below—in a big black sedan. Inside, he's got three hoods and two other gentlemen."

"He didn't bring Theodore Wickland and Jonas up here!"

"He did exactly that. It looks like a shot from a gangster picture. The only thing is, they don't have tommy-guns sticking out the windows."

"He's got Heinie and Elbert!"

"And some other mug driving the car," Marie said. "Pinky came up to the door, and Adam answered it. I ran down before a deputy could get there. I ran out in the fog, and there they were. A deputy—that greasy Henry—asked me who was out there when I came back in, and I said some of my relatives who got worried about us not coming home."

"I'd better talk to your relatives," said Halstead. "Go keep the deputies off for a couple of minutes."

Halstead got out the back door, and a shadow came up to him and said: "Boss, wait'll you get a load—"

"I don't even know who you are," Halstead broke in. "As far as I'm concerned, you never worked for me."

"That's the thanks a guy gets! Here I go an' run down a thread of a clue, an' pick up somethin' hot an' get hold of a couple of mugs that know more about Carmen Carsleigh's murder—"

"Who knows about her murder?" Halstead's spine stiffened.

"Jonas," Pinky crowed triumphantly. "The low-life—that was him that she called last night at a quarter to twelve. I got it from the telephone company. A cheap place with furnished rooms. That's where Jonas lives. He got the call at a quarter to twelve. The landlady there wouldn't talk until Elbert got a little hard. Then she said Jonas left in a hurry in his car."

"What's he say about it?"

"He won't say nothin'. Neither'll Wickland. I could 'a' had Elbert push 'em around a little, but after I got Sarge to get me into that safe-deposit vault, I

told Elbert maybe you'd like to see these mugs personally."

"You're a big help," Halstead said sadly. "Here I just miss landing in the can myself, and now you bring a lawyer here, and one of his men, and I know you didn't bring 'em by any gentle persuasion."

"Heinie was awful gentle," Pinky defended. "An' I got a swell line on Wickland. Picked it up yesterday while I was lookin' around. Sarge Lindom says the vice squad'd give anything to get somethin' on him. He's a mouthpiece for a coupla crooks. I told Sarge we might have to get a little rough, but Sarge says he knew you'd use good judgment."

Halstead opened the rear door of the sedan on the right side.

Elbert, as they called him, wasn't Elbert at all. He once had a police record as one Grabber Getz. He was tall, lean and ugly, with a broken nose and a slit of a mouth and a Brooklyn accent. Heinie Heilberg affected wasp waists and slick hair, and he too, was not beautiful.

Halstead opened the rear door and looked in. Heinie said: "Hi, Arthur."

Elbert said, "Howya, pal." He flashed on a pocket torch, and Halstead saw Wickland and Jonas on the floor of his car. They didn't look very happy.

Halstead said: "We can make this short and sweet if you boys want to answer a couple questions. Otherwise—"

"I'll see you in hell first," Wickland snarled.

"I know where we can go and settle this thing," Halstead said sadly. He climbed in. He stepped on Jonas, but he couldn't help it. Pinky got into the front seat by the driver and Halstead said: "Go on around the drive and turn left when you go out the gate."

The driver purred into motion almost silently. They turned into the country road that wound down to Carverdale.

"Turn sharp left into the next lane," Halstead directed the driver.

"WHERE you takin' us?" Jonas demanded.

"You ought to know," Halstead said. "You're no stranger. You nor Wickland, either one. Mrs. Carsleigh had you here before. She's dead now. That's too bad, but we can all get together there until I think the time's ripe to call in those deputies."

The car bounced up through the winding lane and came to a stop by the stable door. There weren't any lights visible;



"Heinie, you open that stable," Halstead ordered. "Nothing like a good solid concrete stall for—"

"A lotta good this'll do you, you—"

Heinie's knuckles drew a thin red trickle. Wickland licked the blood off his lip. Heinie got out, dragging Wickland behind him. Elbert took Jonas, and they all went into the stable.

"What'll we do first, boss?" said Elbert.

"It's pretty cold in here," Halstead observed. "I guess you better let me wrap up in Jonas' overcoat. Then take his pants off. Take Wickland's pants, too. If there's anything that'll handicap a man, it's being caught without his pants on."

Jonas' suspender-buttons and part of his suspenders came with the jerk. The large man, deprived of his overcoat, kicked and squalled.

Wickland was dancing around on one leg, cursing. His hands were taped behind him so he couldn't use them.

"We can crack a window in the stall," Halstead said. "That'll give a draft."

He reached out with a mild hand, cupped his palm under Wickland's chin, snapped the chin up suddenly. "If you're ready to answer a couple of questions now—"

"Whatta you want me to say?" Wickland tried to keep his legs together as if the contact of one with the other would help toward warmth.

"Why'd Carmen Carsleigh hire you to watch my office on the day Gisbon was murdered?"

"Who said she hired me?" Wickland almost screamed. His teeth chattered.

Halstead turned to Elbert. "He's a contrary little shyster. I'll leave the pair of 'em with you boys. You can kind of work on 'em. When they get ready to talk, send me word. I got my hands full at Waldredge Hall."

HE turned casually and went toward the door. The driver followed him. He went through the door, and heard a yell. He got into the car. The driver got behind the wheel and said: "Okay, boss?"

Halstead said: "We won't have to move, I don't think."

"I'll start the motor, maybe speed her up an' go in gear an' move a few feet."

"Okay, you start her."

The car moved a yard and a half when they heard Pinky's hail.

The car stopped, and Pinky said: "Wickland wants his pants, boss. He'll

answer any questions you wanna ask. You oughta seen what Elbert done to him."

"I don't want to see," Halstead answered honestly.

ALL the snarling defiance was gone out of the small man. He had his pants on now, but his hands were still taped. He answered questions hesitantly, conscious of Elbert looming over him, just a half step behind him.

"I met Mrs. Carsleigh through a friend," he said. "A guy that runs a roadhouse out on the Frederick road."

"This woman and the dead man, Gisbon—they went there together a lot?" Halstead asked.

"That's right," Wickland admitted.

"You met Carmen Carsleigh there. How'd she know about your profession?"

"I gave her a card. She said sometime she might need a lawyer. I forgot about her until a week ago she came to my office. She said she had a problem, and thought I might help her."

"What kind of problem?"

"She said she was a little suspicious about somebody in a business deal. She might need a little investigating done. She said she'd see me again and give me all the details."

"When'd you hear from her again?"

"Monday. She called me up and asked me if my investigation business included having somebody watched. I told her it did. She came to my office yesterday at twelve-thirty."

Halstead got a cigarette from Heinie.

"She said she wanted your office watched," Wickland went on. "She wanted to know if a large woman went up to see you. She gave me her description. She said the woman would arrive at the Union Station, and gave me the time. I sent Jonas to watch for her."

"What'd she say about Lucy Starford?" Halstead demanded.

"She said Lucille Starford was coming into town in a cream convertible and told me what road to watch. She said she wanted to know what Miss Starford did, and if she went to your office she wanted to know that. I sent another man to watch for the cream convertible."

"That was Eddie?"

"God! You haven't picked him up too?"

"Operating a detective agency and carrying on a detective business without a license," Halstead mumbled. "That's a rap, too. Don't forget that, Wickland."

"Eddie didn't have any trouble picking up the girl. She stopped right on the edge of town near where he was watching, and used the telephone in a drug-store to call your office. Eddie heard the whole conversation. The girl stopped for a sandwich, so Eddie called in and asked what next. I got in touch with Mrs. Carsleigh, and she said to have Eddie pick up the dame and find out what she wanted to see Halstead about."

"Mrs. Carsleigh seemed damned desperate to find out why Victoria Waldredge was coming to my office," Halstead said.

"Desperate as hell. And when Eddie didn't get anything out of the Starford girl, my client left my office in a huff about four-thirty."

"You didn't hear from her until she called Jonas near midnight."

"No."

Halstead turned to Jonas. "What'd she say when she got you on the phone?"

Jonas looked at Wickland for a sign. Wickland nodded.

Jonas said: "She wanted me to come up right away—up here where we're now."

"And you came."

"I come an' I got away again—quick."

"You saw the body," Halstead said. "What time'd you reach the house?"

"It was foggy—like now. I hadda go slow. I guess it was two bells when I found my way. I got lost."

"Tell me about the body."

"Well, I banged the knocker. There was light on in the hall, an' when nobody come, I began to get nervous. I tried the knob, but it didn't turn. I walked around the house, an' the back door was standin' open into the hall. I stepped in an' called the lady's name—an' then I seen her. I didn't do any hesitatin'—I backed out o' there an' tore out. I tore out so fast I went in the ditch an' like to stayed there all night. I didn't wanna take a chance on callin' for help. I finally got the car out myself. I got back to the city about six bells."

"NEITHER one of you guys knew what this woman's game was?"

"She never told me a thing," Wickland said stoutly. "I swear to God she never—"

"You'll stand up to the Sheriff and tell him the same story?"

"Hell, Halstead, we can't stand up to any Sheriff. You know that."

"That's right, you can't." Halstead turned to Elbert. "Maybe you'd better

take those boys back to town. Buy 'em a couple of drinks. Then it mightn't do any harm to frisk Wickland's office. Comb it with a fine-tooth—"

"What's the idea—"

"Just to make sure you're telling me the truth."

BACK at Waldredge Hall, Halstead hurried through the kitchen. Pinky had given him the safety-deposit box list. Adam was helping the cook with the last touches on the dinner. The gaunt old servant looked up quickly, then followed Halstead into the passage that led out to the main hall.

"If I could say somethin', sir—just a minute—they got Miss Lucy, sir, an' Miss Victoria—she's upset. The first time I've ever seen her that way. The—"

"Who's got Miss Lucy?"

"That Sheriff, an' the man he brought with him. The man with the glasses. They've had her in that library pumpin' questions at her—all kinds of questions. Two deputies left here in a hurry. Then they came back. I'm worried—"

"You want to explain one thing to me, Adam? Tell me the truth about the ax."

For a long moment the man appeared in a mental agony. He licked his lips, tried to form a word, clamped his mouth shut again.

"Who took the ax from the tool-shed Monday night, or early Tuesday morning?"

"So help me God, Mr. Halstead, I—I can't—"

"You can tell me, Adam, because I know that you know. I know that you followed the person from the kitchen right up to the second-story hall. I know—"

"She didn't kill him, Mr. Halstead."

"Drusilla?"

"It was Miss Drusilla, sir. It was her. But she didn't kill—"

"Don't worry about that. Tell me how you happened to see her—what she did."

"I heard this noise in the kitchen, Mr. Halstead. I told you how I sleep in a little room off the kitchen. I heard this noise in the middle of the night. I got up. I thought it was queer. It was somebody at the back door. I cracked my door wide open to look out, an' I see this shadow, an' I followed it, went along the hall behind, an' when it opened the attic door an' flashed on a little light, it was Miss Drusilla. I got the side view of



ner face against the light. She had something in her arm; then I see that it's the ax from the shed."

"You didn't follow her to the attic?"

"No, I waited in the hall, sir. She was gone a little while, an' then she come back down an' went straight to her room. I went back to my room. The next morning I went up an' found the ax against the bricks of the chimney right over Miss Drusilla's room. I took it back down to the tool-shed. I thought it was queer, sir, but then I thought that maybe she needed it for somethin', only why she'd want to take it up there that time of night I couldn't guess."

"You put it back in the tool-shed?"

"I did, sir. On the bench where we always kept it. Then last night when—when I went out there with you an' Miss Victoria an' we found poor Mr. Gisbon, the first thing I see is that the ax aint there. It's gone, sir. I didn't know what to do—what to say."

"So you don't know if Miss Drusilla was outside about a quarter to nine—"

"I don't know about that, sir. I know she didn't kill him."

HALSTEAD moved wearily up the back stairway. There was light in his room, and the door to the sitting-room stood ajar. Marie came from the sitting-room with a handful of wet photographic contact prints on glossy paper.

Halstead saw the prints and shook his head. "Don't tell me you could make pictures in that thick fog. Good Lord, take you camera-nuts—"

"I can make pictures in the middle of the night. Not that these are likely to help any, but I thought we ought to have a record. Did you get rid of my trick relatives all right?"

"We didn't have too much trouble."

"You found out what you wanted to know?" Marie laid a towel on the small table by the bed, and arranged the prints on the towel, face up.

Halstead told her. "Carmen was playing a dangerous game, and she didn't want anything to happen to it; and when she thought Miss Victoria was on to it—"

"Who tipped her off?"

"That's easy." Halstead, attracted now by the clarity and sharpness of those pictures, walked over. Marie snapped on the light above them.

He said: "Listen, where in the—where'd you get pictures like that? There's a fog outside! There's—look at that sycamore tree by the end of the

arbor. Hanged if it doesn't look like you took it on a sunshiny day with—"

"I took it in the fog," Marie explained, pleased at the admiration he showed for her technical ability. "Red filter on infra-red film. Cut film. I had a box in my case, so I loaded my magazines. Had to work on a tripod with it."

"You mean that infra-red with a red filter'll cut through—"

"It'll cut through anything. You go out there and stand where I set up my tripod. About the middle of the carriage-yard, facing the arbor and the house. Your naked eye wouldn't make out anything of these tree limbs. Not the way that fog was this afternoon when I shot—"

"Wait a minute." Halstead bent suddenly over one of the prints. There was the arbor, and near it the sycamore. There was the tool-shed on the left of the arbor. Above the arbor the tree spread its limbs. Clear and sharp—

"You got that magnifying-glass," Halstead said, "that we examine my small negatives with?"

"I've got it." Marie disappeared into the sitting-room, and presently came back with the glass.

Halstead squinted now with the field of the lens covering a small section of the sycamore tree's branches. Marie stood over him tensely.

When he straightened, he looked at her with queer lights dancing in his eyes.

She said: "So the picture tells you something after all."

He might have answered then, might have told her, had not the thump on the door halted him—the twist of the knob and, a second later, the figure of Lucy Starford in the door with eyes swollen from tears, and face deathly pale.

Lucy said, "They dragged it out of me!" and she looked at Halstead pleadingly.

Halstead leaned over her with alarm. "You didn't tell 'em where Bob—"

"No, not that. But about Tom and Carmen, and the telephone conversation, and about kissing Bob the night before there on the porch. And Drusilla told how Bob hated Tom, and how she and Joel hated him. That Mr. Kittering—" She broke off with a shudder.

AT Halstead's request Miss Victoria promised to see him in her room immediately after dinner, and as he later went upstairs, he hoped Marie could carry out the mission he'd assigned her to. She was so good at getting into peo-

ple's rooms, he thought she just might find if Drusilla Waldredge had taken some sort of box from the hiding-place in the attic. A box about the size of the clean spot left in the dust. He'd like to know what was in such a box.

IN the large woman's sitting-room, Victoria waited for Halstead to speak.

"You trusted Gisbon," he said.

"Implicitly."

"Miss Waldredge, everybody around here lies to me, covers up. You told me I was to stay here and clean this thing up. You say you trusted Gisbon, even after what he did to your sister and your nephew in getting them into a blue-sky promotion. I've learned a little more about the scheme—"

"From George Mordell," Victoria said.

"How'd you know that?"

"I've known for a long time that some day George Mordell would stoop even to murder to strike back at Mr. Gisbon."

"Did you tell the Sheriff that?"

"I did not!"

"What'd the Sheriff get out of you?"

"Nothing—nothing at all. I'm no fool like Lucy, or Drusilla, or Alberta."

"What'd Alberta tell him?"

"Practically everything she's already told you. Disgusting."

"About overhearing remarks that the wedding should be stopped—"

"With additional color," Victoria put in. "I could have wrung her neck. I tried to stop her, but those men—that one with the glasses—he's beastly."

"He's got to make a case."

"If you'd been somewhere around, the whole session might've been averted."

"Nothing'll stop Kittering," Halstead assured her. "To get back to Gisbon: You wanted him to marry Lucy Starford—very badly."

"I've told you that."

"You refuse even now to believe he was two-timing—he was making a play for Bob Carsleigh's wife—"

"I can't believe it."

"Even after what Lucy told the Sheriff—about the telephone conversation."

"Lucy's distracted—"

"Lucy's perfectly right," Halstead cut in. "Carmen Carsleigh saw Tom Gisbon murdered last night. She was in the toolshed waiting for him, or she went there right after the murder. Anyhow, she was there. She—"

"Lucy didn't say that."

"Lucy doesn't know it. At least, I don't think she knows it, not unless—"

"Unless what?"

"Nothing, Miss Waldredge. Last night, just before he went out, Gisbon came to your sitting-room—to this room. What'd he come for?"

"Merely to tell me he was going in to meet you."

"That's what he said? He was going to meet me?"

"That's what he said."

"Grinsby walked up here with him," Halstead said. "Grinsby—"

"Willis left Tom at the door. Willis said something about going with Tom. I heard Tom say he could drive through the fog with his eyes shut, or something like that. Willis looked in and told me good-night."

"How long was Gisbon in here?"

"Not over three or four minutes," Victoria answered. "He had his coat on. He stood just outside the door."

"And he never told what made him want to hire me to see that his wedding went off as he planned."

"He didn't. But looking at it now, I'm sure it was—well, it must've been George Mordell. It must've been that Mr. Mordell was trying some crooked work. You see, Tom said on the telephone that he'd just come onto something that might interfere with his and Lucy's happiness. If you can get out of Mordell—"

"That's an angle," Halstead mumbled. "You still swear you always trusted Gisbon—trusted him so thoroughly that you let him have full charge of all your investments, everything."

"He's never failed me."

RISEING, Halstead inquired: "You'd planned any kind of wedding-present for the two of them? Money, or anything?"

"My intention was to transfer certain securities to Lucy and Tom."

"You'd mentioned that to Gisbon? Or to Lucy, or anybody?"

"It was to be a surprise."

Halstead went to the door. "You're sure you haven't held back anything on me. I mean—"

"I've answered your questions, Mr. Halstead."

He had just closed the door. He was in the hall when a scream came from somewhere outside in that smothering blanket of fog—high and shrill with fear and surprise, and then all at once stifled.

The door behind him opened. Miss Victoria snapped: "What was that?"



Then she said: "Do something! Don't stand—" There were sounds of people down below running over padded carpet.

Electrified into action, Halstead sprang down the steps two at a time—the rear steps that let directly into the kitchen passage. The heavy woman followed.

The kitchen door was open. It was a big kitchen, with a long table in the center. There were plates of food on the table, half consumed. The back door let in the cold fingers of the fog.

OUTSIDE in the darkness, a cry went up, and two quick shots followed, as Halstead plunged into the fog along the flagstones under the arbor.

"I got her!" It was the man called Dave, who had a tooth out. "I winged 'im! He tried to run, an' I winged 'im."

Two torches flashed on the ground.

Another voice, Adam's, said: "Is—she dead?"

"She's bleedin'," the deputy Henry answered. "She got hit hard. She—"

Then Halstead saw the figure on the ground in the circle of light, saw the thin pointed face, and the frizzy hair now all awry, and the long gash over her eye, from which blood pumped slowly with the slowing beat of her heart.

The ponderous mountain of woman, Victoria, came up and looked and said, "*Alberta!*" and for the first time there was something in her tone—stark terror, an awesome dread.

Out of the dark came other moving figures, and Dave crowed with triumph. Dave said: "Somebody go call Elam. I got the Carsleigh guy—caught him red-handed, I did. Winged him."

Halstead took a torch from one of the men and ran it over the inert figure. Alberta wore the reversible raincoat with the tan side out that she had worn that noon, and on the tan coat were water-like spots such as a shower would make.

"There's a chance, maybe," he said. "If her skull's not fractured. Somebody help take her in."

It looked as if everybody in the house was there, milling about, asking questions, talking all at once.

Adam stooped down and lifted the woman in his arms. He picked her up as he might have picked up a child.

Halstead saw the gaunt deputy called Alfred supporting Bob Carsleigh. Bob was hopping on one foot. Bob's face was drawn and white. Blood pumped between his fingers where he had them clasped over his calf.

Lucy Starford cried: "Bob—they shot you! Oh, Bob—"

Bob said, "It isn't much; a bandage—"

"He's lucky Dave didn't drill 'im through the middle," Alfred gloated. "Dave's a handy shot, Dave is. Seen him runnin' an' yelled, 'Stop!' an' when he didn't stop, Dave hadda draw."

"Gimme that light a minute," Halstead said. He took the light from Dave's thick fingers. Dave tried to say something; then he just stared.

"Where the hell you think—" He didn't finish. He started for his gun, then checked his hand. Halstead was climbing through the side of the arbor.

Halstead turned the light over the top of the arbor, then into the sycamore branches. Then he dropped off the side to the ground, and his mouth was a grim line.

Dave grabbed the light from him and shouted: "Everybody get in the house. Everybody get in the parlor. If anybody turns up missin'—"

"Get in, everybody," Henry bawled.

## Chapter Twelve

THE family doctor was in the bedroom with the shade of the table lamp tilted so the light could show the sagging features of the woman on the bed. The woman didn't stir, scarcely breathed.

Victoria Waldredge watched the doctor's movements with her black shoe-button eyes. She was breathing heavily.

Halstead said: "What would you say hit her, Doctor?"

The doctor said: "It could've been a club, I suppose. You saw how the skin was broken and the bone dented."

"A club, or maybe the butt of a gun, Doc?" Halstead asked. "Or maybe the leather heel of a shoe?"

"It's hard to say. The blow was driven downward, as if her assailant had stood well over her. Probably threw her to the ground and then hit her."

"Be frank with me, Doctor," Victoria said. "Does she have a chance?"

"Perhaps; it's too early to say," the Doctor answered gravely. "I think she'll pull through. She's small and frail, but she's got sound organs and good blood."

The door opened. The deputy named Dave came in without knocking.

"The Sheriff wants you down in the parlor, ma'am," Dave said. "An' you." Nothing respectful in this last, as he addressed Halstead.



Victoria looked at Halstead, and Halstead said: "We might as well get it over with. It's not going to be very nice."

Dave went out the door. Victoria turned to Halstead and said, "If you could spare my family any hurt, Mr. Halstead—" And broke off abruptly.

"You can put your mind to rest about that."

"I'm not likely to forget it, Mr. Halstead. I've always been a generous person."

"Maybe a little too generous," Halstead answered.

"I'd rather see any member of my family dead, than have to face court and be dragged through all that mess and—"

"Don't worry too much, Miss Waldredge."

"You know, of course, who's responsible for all this?"

"Practically everybody under this roof's had a hand in it, one way or another. We better face it out now, before Lucas loses his mind."

Halstead's eyes searched the big living-room for Marie and he didn't see her. He ran over the instructions he had whispered to her after he had come in from the arbor; and now her absence from the assembling group made him feel less dejected.

He himself didn't want to be here. He could think of many things more pleasant. Elam Lucas wasn't in the room, neither was Kittering; but Alfred, one of Lucas' deputies, was standing near the door checking each person that came in. It was as if he were taking up tickets from people who had paid their money and were coming in to see some kind of show.

There was the dying hum of conversation that had been forced, and because it had no other impetus than force, found force not enough.

And then they brought in Bob—and Oliver Grayne.

Halstead felt his fingers tighten. One side of Bob's mouth was blue and

swollen, and there was a trace of dried blood on his chin. His collar was torn, his tie around to one side, his hair disheveled. Elam Lucas looked flushed and angry, and Oliver Grayne twitched one brow up and the other down, and tried to assume some dignity as all eyes turned toward them.

Elam Lucas came in ahead of Kittering, whose owlish eyes behind dark rims did not smile. Then the other deputies, Henry and Dave and a strange one, brought up the rear like a triumphant army with their prisoners beaten down.

Only Elam Lucas wasn't triumphant; and when Halstead caught Bob's defiant eyes, he knew that Bob had told Lucas nothing.

Lucas looked sourly at Alfred, the deputy, and said:

"We got 'em all?"

Alfred said: "Yes, siree, we got 'em all but the lady that's hurt, and her doctor, an'—an'—say!"

"Say what?"

"That other one—the dark one—Halstead's missus. She aint—" He looked around as if in quick panic.

Lucas glared at Halstead and said: "Bring her in, Dave! Go find her."

Halstead said: "She'll come. You won't have to bring her. She's—"

MARIE chose that moment for her entrance, as if she had been waiting in the wings for her cue. She was aloof, smiling coolly, nodding to Lucy across by the fireplace. She came by Halstead and spoke out of the side of her mouth the way Elbert did. She said: "I got the hat and the ax, boss."

"Did the hat—"

"Yes."

She moved over to a chair. Then Lucas raised a hand and said: "Quiet, ever'body."

The quiet was complete, strangely electric. They wouldn't let Bob sit. His bandaged leg he held crooked to the knee, keeping all weight off it.



Lucas said: "We got a couple things to clean up in this investigation. We're gonna ask you all to cooperate. We arrested this man Carsleigh, an' I'm chargin' him with murder in the name of the people of Maryland."

"You can't do that," Halstead said.

SOMEBODY gasped. Lucas turned to Halstead with an icy stare. Kittering smiled sneeringly.

"I'll show you what I can do, an' what I can't—"

"Halstead, tell these men—" Bob's eyes were pleading.

"Shut up!" Dave looked as if he'd take a sock at Bob.

"I don't need any tin-horn private dick from the city to tell me my business," Elam Lucas said. "Do I, Kittering?"

Kittering said: "You're all right, Sheriff. You've got your man. You've made an arrest. As an officer of the State, I feel that I should apologize to all of you who've been inconvenienced by this investigation. As it is—"

"Bob—you didn't do it!" Lucy came toward him. Fear was in her green eyes. "Bob, make them believe you. Tell them—"

"I'll tell 'em for him," Halstead said. He turned to Kittering. "Take the handcuffs off him. He didn't kill Tom Gisbon, any more than you did. He had nothing to do with Tom Gisbon's death other than—"

"Oh, he didn't! Perhaps you know who did, Halstead. Perhaps you can tell us a pretty story that we can believe, and that'll free this culprit and—"

"I can make about sixteen different kinds of monkey out of you and Lucas and your whole retinue. And if you think I'm boasting, go ahead and take this man in. Go ahead and do it."

"Listen, Halstead," Kittering barked, "I've always heard you were good at bluff. All right, whenever a man bluffs, his bluff ought to be called. Name the man you claim did the crime."

"Take the bracelets off Carsleigh and let him sit down, first."

"If Carsleigh's hands aren't red with Gisbon's blood, whose are?"

"You're getting dramatic," said Halstead. "This isn't a courtroom. You don't have any twelve nitwits in a jury box to sway. Just take it calmly. Carsleigh's hands aren't red with anybody's blood. But if ever there was a deliberate, first-class, cold-blooded murder

planned with a perfect fall guy to hang the blame on, it was the murder of Tom Gisbon. The murder of Carmen Carsleigh—well, that had to follow, because the murderer never figured on her when the plan was laid to put Gisbon out of the way. The killer knew about Carmen, but never figured on her counting much, because—"

"Carsleigh killed Gisbon," Kittering interrupted, "because he was nuts about Lucy Starford an' couldn't stand to see her marry him. He killed his wife because she stood in his way too. He went out an'—"

"What'd he attack Alberta Waldredge for?" Halstead demanded.

The Sheriff blinked at him savagely.

"Because he was sneakin' around, tryin' to see Lucy, an' Miss Alberta seen him, an'—"

"That's a good guess, but not good enough. Did you ask Carsleigh what he was doing out there in the fog when Miss Alberta screamed?"

"Sure we asked him."

"What'd he say?"

"He said he wasn't walkin' around in the fog. He said he was in the barn. He said he heard her scream an' run toward the spot. He was afraid for Lucy. He said he didn't know who it was. He seen her light—"

"Did he tell you why he was in the barn?" Halstead demanded.

"No. He refused—"

"I'll tell you why he was in there." Halstead's eyes, dark and charged with little lights, looked upon the Sheriff broodingly. "He was in there because I put him there, and I told him to stay there. I put him—"

"We got him, Kittering," Elam Lucas cried with glee. He started for Halstead. "We got him. Hidin' a murderer, thwartin' the law—"

"You haven't got anything. No case, not even a prayer. Do you think I'd stand by and see you frame a client of mine, and railroad him, and—"

He broke off when he saw Adam appear in the doorway.

"What you want?" Lucas snarled at the butler.

ADAM addressed Halstead. "The gentlemen you sent for, Mr. Halstead. They're here. They just got here in the fog—"

"He's tryin' to pull a fast one," Elam screamed. "If he thinks he's gonna pull somethin'—"

## ONE FOR THE MONEY

"Who are the gentlemen, may I ask?" Kittering demanded.

"Gentlemen of the press," Halstead announced. "Two men from Washington. Two from Baltimore. They've been in Carverdale waiting for word—"

"I aint gonna stand for this," Lucas blazed. "If you think I am—"

"JUST a minute, Elam." Kittering's contemptuous smile thinned and he said to Adam: "Show the gentlemen in, Adam." He jerked down on his lapels to make his cheap store suit's collar ride his neck a little better. He took off his glasses and polished them, and put them on again. He replaced the soiled blue-gray silk kerchief in his breast pocket. He strutted a little with his chest puffed out. He was the State's Attorney with courtroom pomposity, preening himself, getting ready for a kill.

Adam brought in the quartet. One had nose-glasses and a plaid topcoat that hadn't been cleaned or pressed in years. One had a camera with a bag and lights, and a lot of trappings. He said, "Where's the *cherche femme*? I gotta get a shot—"

Kittering introduced himself to the reporters, and they just gave him a cold inquiring eye. Kittering introduced the Sheriff.

A Baltimore reporter asked: "You made an arrest?"

The Sheriff said: "We sure have. We got—"

"The wrong man," Halstead finished for him. "They won't believe me. You guys have to be witnesses."

"Mr. Halstead seems to feel," Kittering explained, "that the county law-enforcement machinery has sagged down—when, as a matter of fact, for once in his life, Mr. Halstead appeared to be stopped. If you reporters will come to my office after this prisoner's booked—"

"Who's the prisoner?" The Baltimore man with the bushy hair said. He had a piece of copy-paper and a stub of a pencil in his hand.

"Robert Carsleigh," Kittering announced proudly. "Name's been prominent in suburban society in time past. Husband of the woman found shot in his home immediately after the slaying of Gisbon."

"How about the weapon Gisbon was conked with?"

"The medical examiner reported a blunt instrument. Some sort of—"

"You mean you don't know yet what weapon was used, or where the weapon

is?" the Baltimore man demanded. He made a gesture with his copy-paper.

"We have our suspicions," Kittering answered uncomfortably.

"Blunt instrument. But you don't know—"

"I do," Halstead put in casually. "If you'd like to know—"

"What was it, Arthur?" the photographer demanded. "Don't string these boys along. They say a blunt instrument. If you got the right dope—"

"They're halfway right," Halstead said, "only halfway. Blunt on one side and sharp on the other. It was an ax."

"Who told you that?" Kittering demanded. His smile had died.

"The one witness to Gisbon's murder," Halstead answered calmly. "The one witness that none of you ever counted on."

### *Chapter Thirteen*

THERE was a savage gleam behind the lenses of Kittering's glasses. His chin protruded. Lucas twisted up his mouth. For one full second the room was silent. So silent that Oliver Grayne's tremulous intake of breath pounded hard on the eardrums. And George Mordell looked at him. Halstead looked at Mordell and saw how the big untidy man was grasping the arm of the chair he sat in, saw the white-and-pink bulges on the back of the fat hand.

Lucas broke the tension. He snarled: "I told you he was concealin' evidence. He hid a criminal; he hid the murder weapon on account of he was the first one to get to the body after the murder happened. He tol' me he didn't touch nothin'. He swore—"

"I didn't touch it," Halstead answered. "Somebody took it away ahead of me."

"Now you'll be tryin' to tell us you know it was an ax but you aint seen the ax. You'll be—"

"Yes, I've seen it," Halstead admitted. "I know where it is now—unless it's been moved in the past few minutes."

"I demand you produce it," Kittering said. "As State's Attorney, I demand—"

"Bring in the ax, Adam," Halstead said.

Adam disappeared, and again that terrible tensiety came over the room.

Adam returned from the hall carrying the ax as Marie had instructed him, carrying it with a cloth as if to protect any prints that might be on it. Marie had



carried it down from its hiding-place just that way.

Kittering sprang forward. He took the thing from the servant's hands. He held it gingerly. Then his glittering eyes fastened on Halstead's face.

"You'd better talk now, Halstead. And fast. You're in a spot—"

"Don't you get it, Kittering?" Lucas demanded. "He planted the ax. He don't know anything. He planted—"

"Shut up," Halstead said. His tone had changed.

"You said you know a witness to that murder," Kittering said. "You said the witness told you about the ax. You—"

"If I can have a couple minutes of quiet," Halstead snapped, "I can get this thing over with! Now let me do the talking: I said there was a witness to Gisbon's murder that none of you figured on, and I'm going to prove it. There was also a witness to Carmen Carsleigh's murder—the same one."

Halstead looked at Kittering. "I'm going to ask a question of everybody in this room. Everybody! You men listen to the answers. Some are going to tell me the truth; one, at least, is going to lie. The one that lies is the witness I'm talking about."

"How will you know who lies?" Lucas asked.

"First I've got to go back a little bit," Halstead explained patiently. "I've got to tell you Bob Carsleigh contributed a lot to this murder. So did Lucy Starford; so did Victoria Waldredge and—"

"What nonsense is this?" Miss Victoria demanded.

"It isn't nonsense. It's dead serious. Virtually everybody in the house, every member of the family, made a contribution to the thing without knowing it. For instance, Miss Victoria's decision to settle some securities on Lucy as a wedding-present. Miss Waldredge's always been generous. Maybe it started long before that, when Miss Victoria trusted Thomas Gisbon so completely with her investments, with the management of that part of her estate."

"You're talking in circles, Halstead," said Kittering. "Come to the point."

"I've got to go back," Halstead defended. "This is important. Because but for one little slip, this might have been the perfect crime."

Goldrick's ruddy face had taken on a queer purple. Oliver's nose twitched, and his mouth threatened to go perma-

nently out of shape. Willis Grinsby dropped a comforting hand on Oliver's sleeve, as Halstead went on:

"Everybody's made some contribution to the perfection of this crime, and almost everybody in the house lied to me in some way when I asked questions. I got around most of the lies you people told me; I'll reveal one that I myself told."

Somebody laughed a little in nervous relief.

"Not right at this moment, but presently," he said. "When I started to poke into the thing, everybody in the place loved Tom Gisbon like a brother, with the exception of Joel Starford and Drusilla Waldredge. The first questions I asked indicated that nobody knew of any reason at all why Gisbon should be killed. Little by little, however, it developed that Gisbon didn't have any loving friends. He was a lone wolf, in a way, a man who lived his own life."

"I talked to his partner, Mr. Grinsby, who should know him better than most anyone here, from both social and business contacts, and Mr. Grinsby honestly admitted that Gisbon wasn't very well liked. He was, as Grinsby put it, one for the money. Money was his god, and he judged all things by money. Then I found out that Oliver Grayne had had a couple of pretty ugly scenes with Gisbon because of Gisbon's attention to Carmen Carsleigh. Before I was through, I found out that those in the house with the possible exception of Alberta Waldredge, Victoria Waldredge, Willis Grinsby, John Goldrick and Adam, all had an intense dislike of the man, and any one of them might be more or less motivated to put him out of the way."

"YOU didn't mention my sister," Joel Starford blurted suddenly. "You didn't excuse her—"

"I couldn't mention her with the others, because, as you well know, Starford, something happened to her on the stairway just before six o'clock last night."

"What?" Kittering demanded.

"She heard the man she was supposed to marry today—she heard Gisbon call Carmen Carsleigh on the telephone, and call her darling, and say that he could get out for a little while, because he was supposed to meet a friend at the train. That, blasting the mind of a young woman in love, might make a murder motive. Or it might give someone dear to her a motive. Starford, for instance,

her brother. She told Starford about it in a panic, when she couldn't hold in any longer. She told him about it up in her room, and Starford left the house at approximately the time Gisbon went out the back door. Left a little ahead of Gisbon—"

"You lie, Halstead. You can't prove I did anything of the sort!"

"Don't interrupt, Starford. You went out, and something happened to you, and you explained it that Gisbon ran you down with his car. You were cut and bruised and unconscious when the Sheriff found you. I asked you what you wanted with Gisbon, trying to flag him down that way, and you said you wanted a private talk. What you wanted to do probably was beat the tar out of him, because he not only deeply hurt your sister, but he was having an affair with the woman you'd fallen for."

"I won't stand for this, Halstead."

"You'll have to stand for it. You lied about several things when I asked you simple questions. You refused to tell me what you wanted of Gisbon. I'm going to ask your sister now to tell the truth about her talk with you."

"I—told him," Lucy said. Her green eyes were wider. "But he didn't—he couldn't kill anybody. He was terribly angry, but—"

"That's all I want to know," Halstead cut in. "Let's get back to the actual crime. It was necessary for somebody in this house to murder Gisbon in order that his wedding should not take place. That brings us to motive and opportunity." He raised his brows, rubbed his hand over them wearily. "Two people here had both. One was in the house; one was outside the house. Joel Starford was in the house; and Bob Carsleigh, desperate for one last glimpse of Lucy Starford, for a last word with her, was out in the woods—sitting, as he said, in his parked car, trying to make up his mind to stage an abduction if he could get away with it."

**B**OB looked up from the rug, and his eyes were worried. Joel glared.

"The murderer," Halstead continued, "probably knew Carsleigh would be close around. He knew Starford was there. He knew he had to act quickly. He was familiar with the house and grounds, and the tool-shed.

"Everything was set to make this job short and sweet, and to leave no trail behind. Carsleigh, if he didn't have an

iron-clad alibi, would be picked up. Joel Starford would be picked up. The murderer wasn't worrying about that any.

"Now John Goldrick and Oliver Grayne both left the house last night about eight-thirty. Mr. Grinsby and George Mordell were guests in the house. Grinsby walked to the door of Miss Victoria's sitting-room with Gisbon when Gisbon got ready to start for the train to meet me. Gisbon, mind you, knew I wasn't coming by train. He'd got my telegram that I was driving in. But he was taking the opportunity for one last tryst with Carmen.

**T**HUS happened the first slip in the killer's perfect cog. The killer didn't know about the telegram, or that Gisbon had called Carmen and had told her they could have a little time together. The killer had no idea that Carmen Carsleigh would be out there in the garage, or on the walk, or somewhere near that tool-house.

"Gisbon said a few words to Miss Victoria, went down through the kitchen." Halstead paused and turned to Adam. "Adam, when Gisbon went out, he carried a light, didn't he? A torch?"

"A flashlight, sir," Adam answered.

"He carried the light and lit his way along the walk under the arbor. Now one of the things that got us all off, was finding Gisbon's body in that tool-shed, and wondering how a man could be hit like that. And I didn't get it at all until just before dinner tonight. My—er—we made a photograph of the arbor and house from the carriage-yard with infrared film and filter. That cuts fog. That picture cleared up how the murder was committed." He took the picture and handed it to Kittering. Then he gave Kittering the magnifying-glass.

"Look at that heavy bough that hangs over the arbor," Halstead told Kittering. "What do you see under the glass?"

"Looks like the bough's been cut with something. It's just hanging loose."

"That's right. Look again, and you'll see the bough's just about the distance above a man's head that would cause an ax, on its backswing, to bite into it. Especially a sharp ax."

"This blade's like a razor," Sheriff Lucas said.

"Okay. We know how Gisbon died now. We know what caved in his forehead like that. He was walking under the arbor with his light; and when he came to the end of the arbor, the killer,



standing on the cross-members that made the arbor roof, raised the ax and made one quick swing. When the ax went up, it did two things. Its blade bit into the tree, because the blunt nose was what the killer used. That bite half clipped off a bough and shook a lot of water down out of the tree. Like a shower. That's what made the water-spots on Gisbon's pale gray hat. Remember, you men?"

He looked at the staring group. "I asked all of you if there'd been a shower. You all said there hadn't been."

**S**IGHING, he resumed: "That bite into the bough wasn't important—at least, not then. Gisbon fell. His assailant jumped off the arbor, pulled the body back six feet to the tool-shed, and pulled it in there. He put the hat by the body. Then he realized he wasn't alone. Somebody was coming. He got out of sight. There wasn't anything else he could do. He left the ax on the walk. All this while, there'd been the flashlight that Gisbon had carried, and whoever was coming might have seen part of the crime. The killer hid in the shadows, saw that it was Carmen Carsleigh. He ran and got Gisbon's car. He knew Carmen Carsleigh wouldn't raise any hue and cry. He ran the car to where he left it, just to give the idea that Gisbon had actually left. He didn't intend for the body to be found very soon. He cut back to the house.

"But Gisbon's body was found just after I arrived; and from that moment on, the more the murderer thought of Carmen having been there, the more it began to prey on his mind. The uncertainty of knowing just what she'd seen. There'd been a gun in Gisbon's pocket which the killer had taken.

"He had to get to Carmen's house as soon as he could—find out if she knew anything. Well, something happened to the deputy on guard outside. He was overpowered. The murderer got out, saw Carmen, found out she really knew who axed Gisbon, and in panic, he shot her."

"You hid the ax until you could run down somethin'," Sheriff Lucas accused, hard cold eyes on Halstead. "You hid—"

"I've got to tell you about that ax," Halstead defended. "In the first place, it almost wasn't there for Gisbon's killer to use. Early yesterday morning Drusilla Waldredge went out to the tool-shed and got the ax and took it to the third floor.

Adam saw her. He lied about it after Gisbon was found dead, because things looked bad for Miss Drusilla. He'd watched Drusilla take the ax up there, and then himself recovered it and took it back where it belonged.

"Drusilla had a use for that ax. She had a box of something hidden in the attic, and she needed a blade like an ax to pry up the board. She apparently went up to the attic to get it last night, discovered the ax gone, and went out to the tool-shed to get it. She found it where it had been dropped, picked it up and carried it back to the attic again. She pried up the board and left the ax there. Alberta, wondering what Drusilla was doing up there, saw her; and when she got a chance, Alberta hid the ax. That's what made it tough—tough as all get-out: This ax floating around!

"Well, when the killer learned that the weapon had mysteriously disappeared, he got more worried. Then today he saw Mrs.—he saw us taking pictures of the scene, and that made it necessary for him to get out there at the first opportunity and get that clipped branch loose and do away with it. As long as this Sheriff couldn't find the weapon, and nobody apparently knew how the murder was committed, he felt fairly safe.

"Tonight, when the deputies were stuffing themselves in the kitchen, the murderer prowled in the fog and went up to the scene of his crime. He got up on the arbor. Alberta, for some reason—probably to round up her cat—was in the carriage-yard and got a spray of the shower from that tree when the man broke that limb loose. She let out a cry, probably calling the cat, and the murderer jumped her.

"You all know what happened after that. Everybody was milling around, and Bob Carsleigh was shot because he'd heard the cry and had come out of hiding. Everything was going swell for the murderer. Here was a man under arrest—the man to whom this crime pointed most!"

"An' I still say you're—"

"Don't say anything yet, Sheriff," Halstead cautioned. "I said I'd ask a question of everybody in this room—one question. And out of those here, somebody will lie."

**A**LL faces were turned to him as his eyes swept them. There was something of quiet terror in the hush.

"The question is, where were you when Alberta screamed? I'll start with Goldrick."

It was a long moment before Goldrick could answer. His tongue seemed thick. He was alone, he said, in the smoking-room. Halstead went on to each of them. He included Marie and Adam.

Halstead said, at last: "You see, Kittering, nobody was out in the fog. Everybody was in the house. But one person's lying. One person *was* out in the fog."

"Who?" Lucas demanded. "For God's sake—"

"The hat, Marie."

Again the ominous, portentous moment of silence, with eyes following the tall dark girl in the mulberry suit—following her out and watching the door, and following her back in again.

She, carried a package around which a newspaper had been lightly wrapped. Halstead took it and brought out—a man's hat. He handed it to the Sheriff.

"The water-spots are drying," Halstead said. "But they're still there."

"You mean—"

"I mean the man who wore that hat shook the tree and clipped Miss Alberta over the head, and didn't realize why I asked him among others last night if there'd been a shower."

"But whose—"

"You might try a little Cinderella game with it. Find out who it fits. But I know. It's Grinsby's hat."

THERE was no sound for a moment. Then Grinsby shouted: "No! It's—it's a deliberate frame-up. He can't—"

He became inarticulate and stared, and his eyes got wider, and hate came into them, and then he started forward, looking wildly for an exit, and then he stopped. He clutched his head with both hands and looked at Drusilla.

He said: "I'm going—mad!" . . .

"Motive," Halstead said later, as Bob and Lucy, Joel and Kittering gathered around him. "Your aunt," he said to Lucy, "knows the answer. Gisbon handled her investments. It was sort of a loose arrangement. Grinsby had access to 'em too. Grinsby traded in some secretly for a lot of worthless boodle—swapped about a hundred thousand in good stuff for worthless paper. And when Victoria told him she was going to settle some of those good securities on the newly-weds, he had to do something

quickly—before Gisbon should be called on to give Miss Victoria an accounting. He figured by killing Gisbon, your aunt would naturally assume that Gisbon had guessed wrong and would take the loss. Victoria told me she'd made no mention of her intention either to Gisbon or Lucy. She forgot to tell me she'd mentioned it to Grinsby."

"You said you lied in this thing too," Kittering said, respectfully now.

"I was supposed to come as a guest of the family's, as an old friend of Tom's. I'd never seen Gisbon in my life—didn't know what he wanted me for. He was dead before I arrived, so I couldn't find out from him."

"You know now?" Kittering pressed.

HALSTEAD figured that one more lie wouldn't hurt. He wouldn't tip off Mordell. He said: "Yes. Grinsby knew Gisbon was hiring me, and Grinsby figured Gisbon was onto his security theft. He figured he couldn't let Gisbon talk to me. Otherwise, he might have planned a different demise at a little different time. But he didn't have much time."

"You said Grinsby himself told you he was the witness of the murder—"

"Yes, and I didn't get it, until I looked at that developed picture."

"What'd he say?"

"We were talking about Gisbon's death, and he said something about it being terrible, poor Tom being struck down and killed like a poleaxed ox. Don't you see? That's exactly how he *was* struck down."

"How about these people—that Ed-die," Lucy said. "The one who—"

"Blame Joel for that," Halstead answered. "He heard your aunt talking about Halstead over the telephone, and when he went to see Carmen that morning, he told her that his aunt was going to see a criminal investigator, and he wondered what for. That right, Joel?"

"You ought to be a mind-reader."

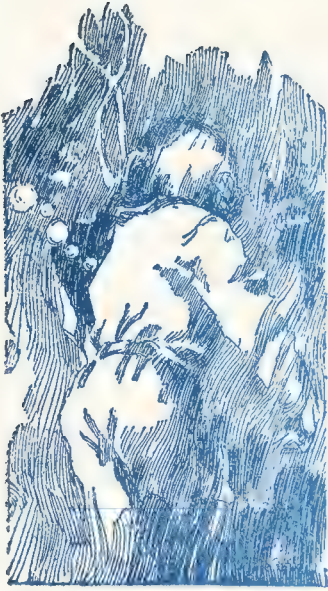
"That put Carmen in a panic, because the only thing she could think of," Halstead said wearily, "was that Victoria was on to her affair with Gisbon, and she simply had to find out if possible." He sighed again.

"We'd better go up to bed, Arthur," Marie said, and put a soft palm over the corrugation above his eyes.

He said: "Bed? Oh, yes. Too foggy, I guess, to drive back tonight."

"Far Call the Bugles" a story of modern American Army life by Lt. Colonel Charles L. Clifford, will be our book-length novel next month.





# The City

*Searching for sunken treasure-ships, Lt. Rieseberg comes upon the weird ruin of the submerged pirate-lair—Port Royal.*

EIGHT years ago it was that I, like a sleepwalker in some incredible dream, came upon an enchanted city, thirty fathoms below the surface ripples of the Caribbean. Of all men, I was the first in nearly two hundred and fifty years to walk the streets of a city which had been deservedly named the "Pirates' Babylon" in its time; now it was a thing of beauty, coral-encrusted in the heart of the incorruptible sea.

For years my business, and pleasure too, has been the salvaging of sunken treasure. My researches had indicated that a number of rich galleons had been sunk in and around Kingston Harbor, Jamaica; therefore I had been making a thorough search, combing the shallower depths in a rubber diving-suit. So far, my success had not been great, but I was still sanguine.

One day I slid over the side of the salvage schooner down my weighted rope until I stood on the sandy bottom at a depth of thirty fathoms—one hundred and eighty feet. I discovered myself in the midst of elaborate coral formations, and the sheer beauty of the scene had a quality that stopped me in my tracks. From where I stood, the smooth sea bed sloped gradually off into distant depths. Surrounding me on all sides was a sort of fantastic fairyland, much like those pastel creations of imagination that illustrate the books of legend upon which the dreams of childhood feed.

Branching coral sculpturings of myriad hues seemed alive in the quivering water, yet they were hard and solid to the touch. As I began to move, the colors of the

corals about me changed with chameleon ease, so that I walked in a land of liquid, flowing rainbows. Coral is no new thing to me. But this was different—different in construction and in the ethereal quality that hung over it like a spell.

The strange fascination of the place made me determined to explore farther, and I started out boldly. Slowly treading the seaway, I was brought up short by an amazing sight.

There before me, rising out of the watery void, was what appeared to be a vague coral-encrusted city—a ghost city thirty fathoms under the sea!

I could have sworn there was a great Gothic cathedral ahead of me, and beyond it other dim and stately edifices, sloping away into further shadowy regions of the underwater world. Straight-shafted spires and pinnacles lifted majestically; tall columns supported overhanging roofs; windows stood open in walls and towers. The dim light of the sun reflected from the surface waters above me sifted down and passed through the windows, gleamed dully through the open spaces between the columns. I felt as if I had been suddenly thrust onto some strange and distant planet; as if I had come to a peaceful town where quiet buildings waited the return of a recently departed populace.

I moved slowly forward toward the nearest of the structures, which at a distance had the appearance of a splendid cathedral. Other structures resembled this building; many had irregular forms which gave the impression that they had been dropped into position without plan or reason whatever. And between their openings, like moving shuttles in a loom, the grotesque harlequin fish were swiftly darting in and out, weaving into the picture snatches of color between the pillars and crevices of the silent edifices.

## REAL EX-

For details of our Real Experience

# Beneath the Sea

By LT. HARRY RIESEBERG

Here the sea-floor continued to slope downward and outward toward the open ocean. I glanced upward and tried to estimate the depth at which I was working, but I had no really accurate way of measuring. I did, however, know that I had been down about as long as was sensible, and by the increasing difficulty I was experiencing in moving about, I realized it wouldn't be wise to go much deeper outward toward the sea. A diver in a rubber suit has to be extremely careful of both time and pressure. Still, the cathedral-appearing structure was close at hand and I felt that I just had to explore it before I went up.

Carefully I placed one of my weighted boots after the other. And as I neared the building, I had to accept the idea that it had originally been raised by human hands.

The formation was perhaps forty feet in length and at least half as high. The crowning coral pinnacles that extended upward toward the surface from the basic bulk of the cathedral structure were about six or eight feet in height. It was obvious to one familiar with coral formations, such as I had been, that this design was not a natural growth, but was cased over some original building or partial structure that had allowed for such openings as windows and doors. And through these openings, which still remained, the magical translucent light which I had remarked before, softly penetrated and filtered. The gay-colored tropical fish passing in and out of these openings gave an impression of enchanted life and activity to the place.

Now, directly in front of me, there appeared what looked like a large doorway. Carefully guarding my air-pipe from the rough and jagged door-casing, I entered the opening. Inside was a chamber with several passages leading off from it.

At first, I hardly noticed the grotesque shapes of the formations within the huge chamber and along the walls; the amazing color was all that I could for the moment perceive. For everything was mantled in blue—not just an ordinary shade of blue, but an incredibly alive blue that seemed to embrace all the various conceivable shadings of that one color. Wherever I looked, my eyes met gradations of blue ranging from azure to hues merging almost into black. It was as though I were wearing blue-tinted glasses. The water was blue; the walls were blue and seemed to have been decorated in variations of the same color. It was like nothing I had ever before beheld, a mystic scene beyond the painter's art.

Slowly and carefully I moved about the huge chamber of blue color and light, peering into some of the openings that branched off from the chamber in which I stood. From one dark hole I drew back with a sense of shock as my quick glance revealed a mass of huge, distorted creatures. Here in the enchanted city were the evil spirits, the water-witches, the baleful guardians of a long-kept secret. They were great spider crabs, and the cold menace that emanated from them sent an involuntary shudder along my spine. Hurriedly I backed away from them, and didn't stop until I was completely out of the structure.

I HAD stayed down now too long. I knew it: The feeling of pressure was like being pinched between the fleshy thumb and the forefinger of some huge giant. I jerked my signal-cord, and soon I was gently raised up, up out of the enchanted city.

By this time I had come to the realization that I, out of all the world of mankind, had discovered the remains of what was once the richest and wickedest city on the entire Spanish Main. There could be no doubt: I had seen what no other living man had gazed upon—the sunken city of *Port Royal*!

PERIENCES

story contest, see page 3.



Port Royal, once the sanctuary of every outlawed man and ship and cause on the Spanish Main; it was the heart of all wickedness, a community founded on corruption and dedicated to vice; it was a shepherdless fold of black sheep where pirates and buccaneers fled from the justice of the outside world and the injustices of each other. It had been built upon the sandy point of the palisades that today form the outer rim of Kingston Harbor, Jamaica—a city in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries of some five thousand inhabitants and hundreds of houses—an impregnable fortress of infamy and licentiousness whose viciousness was unmatched by any place on the globe; a city of vast storehouses crammed almost to capacity with rich merchandise and priceless cargoes, plundered from scuttled ships and sacked towns along the Spanish Main; a place in which its people were more familiar with the grinning skull and crossbones of the Jolly Roger than with the legitimate ensigns of the sea-going nations.

But in the space of an indrawn breath, Port Royal was wiped from the face of the earth on June 7th, 1692, by a deluge and earthquake, and the guilty and less guilty of its inhabitants alike had gone down in this deluge—with the exception of a few half-crazed survivors who managed to escape the harvest of death, somehow struggled across to the far side of the bay, and there, after numerous hardships, founded a new city—Kingston, which stands today.

And now nearly two hundred and fifty years afterward, I had entered Port Royal!

Here was a find of scientific and historical import. My mind became afire with the possibilities I had uncovered. If I could go deeper, if I could follow that sloping sandy floor, what strange sights might I see! And I might possibly recover some of the vast riches which the sea had claimed when the great deluge of 1692 had driven the "Pirates' Babylon" from the world of living men.

Since that time I have dreamed of what a man might find on the floor of the Caribbean in that area—if he could devise some armored or improved diving-gear that would lessen the hazards which are the constant companions of a man in a regulation diving-suit. Soon, I hope, that dream will materialize, and I shall return to the Caribbean, to the watery tomb of one of the most profligate communities the world has ever endured.

# Savage

*Another chapter from  
an American woman's  
jungle adventures.*

SEVERAL days passed, during which we pushed our way deeper into the jungle. Then one night I was roused from sleep by a lion's roar. By now I had become a fair judge of sounds and distances; and I knew that this lion really was not near. But he had awakened me so effectively that I could not fall asleep again; and so I got up, threw a coat over my night-clothes, slipped into my shoes and stepped outside the tent. My personal boy was sleeping alongside, and I did not disturb him. Nor did anyone else hear me, though I made no especial attempt at quiet. I moved from the circle of light, with perfect calm—save for one breathless moment when the puppy put his cold nose against my leg.

I started up the bank of the stream, the puppy coming along, toward a mound which I had noted during the day, and where no shrubbery was present to lend concealment to a prowler. I had my rifle for protection, and the pup to bark a warning, so that I was entirely without fear. I sat down on a boulder that surmounted the knoll, and drank in the indescribable beauty of the night. The tropic moon was full; and the sky was so thickly studded with stars that there seemed no space between. The limpid waters of the river below were bright with their softly swaying reflection. Gently the soft night air caressed my face.

In every life there are unforgettable moments, when time stands still, and one is filled with intimations of truth beyond all understanding. Sitting there alone in the silent dark, I shared with Galsworthy a knowledge of "the sky's consolation; the blessed sense of insignificance in the face of the night's dark beauty which, dwarfing all petty rage and hunger, made men one with it; exalted them to a sense of greatness."

That was such a moment for me. And never have I felt so completely at peace.

At last, reluctantly, I tore myself away, and returned to my tent. No one had noted my absence, nor was aware of my return. I fell asleep, and awoke several hours later, the feeling of peace and of complete well-being still upon me.

# Paradise-II

By BESSE THOMÉ

"I had a lovely walk last night," I said casually to Van Ness at breakfast. "It was very beautiful under the stars."

"You *what*?" he fairly exploded.

"Had a walk," I repeated, startled by his reaction. "I couldn't sleep, so I went out up the river a bit."

He looked at me, consternation and incredulity fighting for precedence in his expression.

"My dear Mrs. Thomé," he said, with slow emphasis, "I am going home. While you are looking at the moon, an affectionate leopard is likely to hug you from behind. Or maybe a lion wants to look at the moon too, from the same spot. And then what happens? I hear for the rest of my life about the dumb Dutchman who takes a woman out to the jungle and feeds her to the wild beasts. A fine guide, they'll say. No, thank you! If that's the way it is, I go home!"

Taken completely by surprise, I protested: "But my dear Van Ness, I assure you I wasn't in the least danger. You know I'm handy with the rifle; and besides, the dog would have barked if any animals came near."

He hardly listened to what I was saying, but broke in, his voice adamant:

"Either you promise to remain in your tent when the camp goes to sleep, or I leave at once."

Reluctantly I promised. Anyway, I had had that night's rare moment; nothing could take that away from me.

A FEW afternoons after that, I had an experience which left me thoroughly chastened in spirit, and meekly obedient for the rest of the journey. It came, however, so much in the course of legitimate events that this time there was no censure from my guide.

Van Ness, together with several of the porters, had gone hunting, for our larder needed meat. This seemed to me an ideal time to take some pictures, as indeed it was. I had seen large numbers of gorgeous birds nesting along the stream a short way down from our camp, and that was to be my destination. Mongi, the cook, wanted to go with me, but I re-



fused. However, he was solicitous for my safety, and was voluble in warning me to stay close to the animal-path which skirted the river, and thus be sure of my safe return. Good advice, had I but realized it!

A turn of the first river bend brought into sight a group of uniquely beautiful Kavirondo cranes, color symphonies in black and white, with crowns of yellow feathers. Hundreds of males were strutting their mating dance, while the females looked on. Each male held a reed or bit of stick in his beak; they were like a lot of orchestra leaders, fondly hoping to enrapture their audiences.

Under the shade of towering trees I followed a winding path to a large clearing. Here the river suddenly widened; and its rockbound shore sheltered an abundant variety of wild life. I got some admirable pictures of the handsome Colobus monkey; and while I was preening myself upon that, a baboon came out and sat himself down upon a rocky watchtower. I was hidden behind a boulder; and anyway, I knew that his shifting eyes were not seeking me, but his bitterest enemy, the leopard. I stood watching him for a while, with the keen amusement that he and his cousins always evoked, even in the natives; and then before he had time to know that anything was happening, I had a picture of him that turned out to be perfect.

There was so much to interest me, that I suddenly realized I had stayed longer than I should have, and hastened to retrace my steps.

But that wasn't as easy as I expected it to be. I don't know how I had wandered from my course; but I found giant ferns walling my way with green for half a mile, and it took me a lot of time to plow through them. Overhead the clouds



had darkened, and rumbles of thunder added nothing to my peace of mind.

Rain came—a veritable deluge, before which any canopy of boughs would be as bad as nothing. I crept under an overhanging shelf of rock, to wait.

But I wasn't the only living thing that had had that inspiration. All the lizards in the world seemed to be camped there. Every crevice yielded them, little ones and big ones, by dozens, by hundreds!

Torrents of rain without, thousands of lizards within, darkness about to fall! Terrorized, I now had but one desire: to get back to the warmth and safety of camp as quickly as possible. Between lizards and rain, I chose the latter.

**B**UT I had barely taken a step out of my retreat, when I stood paralyzed with fright before a new danger facing me. There, right in my path and now not ten yards away, were four slimy crocodiles that had just come out of the river. These reptiles, seen in captivity, always appear slow-moving, awkward and stupid; but every experienced huntsman in Africa knows that they are capable of surprisingly swift movements when aroused, and that their powerful jaws can crush the life from a man as easily as a man can crush an eggshell.

Instinctively I gripped my revolver, though I knew that a bullet would avail little against the horny hides of my foes. I knew I had only one chance, and that was to get away quickly. And there was only one way to go, which was directly past them, across the sandbar where they were taking their ease, and thence with the aid of some bush-grown rocks up the river bank beyond their reach.

My appraisal of the situation was much swifter than the telling. Almost automatically one acts in the face of danger; and in the fraction of an instant after my emergence from the cave, I was running as swift Diana never did. Not once did I look back, as I scrambled up the rocky wall, turned to the animal path, and rushed on toward the haven of the camp. I was weak and sick with terror—but at the same time I was filled with thanksgiving, for at last I was safe.

Ah, but was I? The rain was still pelting down; I was drenched to the skin, and darkness was not more than a brief moment away. Ropelike thorny creepers slapped my face as I hastened by. "Wait-a-bit" thorn trees, so-called because their long spiked thorns will detach pieces of clothing or flesh if one isn't careful to un-

fasten them, slowed my passage. Now and again tough dwarf branches forced me down on all fours, to slide beneath them.

A gnawing doubt seized me; I felt another upsurge of fright. I stopped and listened for the rush of the river; but I heard no sound except the swishing of the rain and the wind in the treetops. I consulted my compass. What it told me meant the removal of doubt, but the intensification of fear. I had wandered into the measureless forest. I did not know where I was.

I no longer hoped to reach camp. All I wanted now was to get back to the river, feeling that then Van Ness and the boys would find me. I retraced my steps, carefully checking my way this time with frequent readings of the compass. Surely I could not have gone far; the going had been too difficult for that. Suddenly I noticed a slight downward grade, and a ravine in which a tiny brook ran new-formed by those torrents of rain. Here was a certain guide back to the river, and I ran with joy to reach the comforting certainty of the bank.

But my troubles were not over. It was pitch-dark by now; and in my eagerness I stumbled into a hole—and I gave up. And then—could it be? A light! A blessed lantern-light glimmering through the trees. Putting all of the little strength I had left into the effort, I called:

"Van Ness! *Van Ness!* This way. Hallo—o-o-o!"

In a moment my guide's reassuring hands were pulling me from my immersion in that water-filled hole. He led me to the camp trail a few yards away, then fired one shot in the air. Immediately—as if from out of nowhere—half the members of the camp appeared, all bearing lanterns.

**V**AN NESS himself fixed me a "sundowner" of extra strength, though the hour for this ritual was long past. Then he ordered me straight to bed, and I was glad to obey. I was ashamed of having caused him so much worry, and told him so.

"I'll never again go out unescorted," I promised, earnestly. "But it was broad daylight, and I thought surely I'd remember the way, and—and—"

Van Ness was magnanimous. He uttered never a word of blame—just chuckled through his whiskers, and broke in upon my stammered explanations to order me again to sleep.



# Mrs. Stripes

*One of her children stowed away aboard his car and made big trouble.*

By CLIFF MAXWELL

I WAS returning from Mexico. My trip had been neither pleasant nor productive—for me. About all I had left was the old rattletrap car I drove, and the tattered clothes I wore. The Rurales had the rest.

Because of my appearance, and also because I had a friend who operated a general store and service-station on the Valley Route, I was taking this "back-door" highway into the little Los Angeles suburb where I lived.

My friend had staked me to gas and groceries enough for a couple of meals and handed me a few dollars; now I was looking for a place to camp for the night.

As a kid, thirty-odd years before, I had spent many happy days with a .22 rifle up in this country. There was a side road, if I could find it, which would take me to a place that would provide camping facilities.

I found the place I was looking for, and parking the car at one side of the road, I got out and set about preparing a level place for my bed; then, my bed made, I began the evening meal.

Supper over, I piled my cooking-gear in a disorderly pile against the rear wheel, intending to wash it and stow in the rumble later on; sprawled comfortably upon my bedding, I rolled a cigarette and sat back to enjoy the scene.

Nothing had changed: The same peaceful quiet; the same haze-filled arroyos; the same brown California hills, and the same somnolent drone of bees gathering honey from the wild sage. The westering sun was tinting the sky and the surrounding hill-tops an unbelievable rose-and-old-gold. Shadows had lengthened. Already the blue haze in the cañons had turned to deep purple.

Across an arroyo the melancholy call of a quail came drifting to my ears like a pixy's whistle, to be answered by its mate a moment later from the depths of

a cactus patch high on the hill behind me. The shadows deepened, and daylight creatures began looking for beds while night's little furred and feathered things began to show themselves.

Here and there a field-mouse would scamper from one hiding-place to another. On the lower limb of a sycamore tree, unoccupied a moment before, a little brown phantom that was an owl, now looked down at me with wise wide eyes and asked in a querulous voice who I was, and by what right was I there.

Behind a distant chaparral, I could dimly discern the odd, masklike face of a fox peering curiously at me. From clumps of sage-brush and cactus wary Molly cottontails hopped furtively into little clearings, and after cautiously looking about, went to feeding, eyes and ears cocked for an enemy approach.

A QUEER sound, between a grunt and a petulant squeak, caused me to glance down the road just in time to see a family of skunks emerge from the chaparral—Mrs. Stripes in the lead and her children, all tails unfurled, trotting sedately in single file behind her. At the edge of the clearing near me, Mrs. Stripes left the road and began looking for likely spots that might offer haven for a mouse.

Finding one, she would call her children, then cleverly and quickly expose the hapless rodent. With a great show of ferocious alertness, for all the world like their domesticated prototype the house-kitten, the kits would pounce on the little animal, and the family would move on to another possible mouse-haven.

Presently, her little pointed nose crinkling comically, Mrs. Stripes paused to sample the air. I thought that she had caught my scent. Instead it was the aroma of food that I had discarded be-



fore stacking up my cooking-gear. She headed for the tidbits, her children obediently following.

After daintily sniffing and sampling it in a manner worthy a conscientious chemist, she stood aside to let the children have a taste. It was my involuntary laughter at the funny picture they made that apprised her of my presence.

She must have uttered one of those sounds below the register of the human ear, for like rapidly blown thistledown, and almost between eye-winks, the children scooted into the bushes, blending so completely with them and the deepening gloom that try as I might, I could see none of them.

Her children safe, Mrs. Stripes, tail erect in a most businesslike manner, faced me, her eyes glowing like phosphorescent rubies as she watched for any hostile move on my part. I sat quietly; and deciding that I didn't have the nerve to come out an' fight, she crinkled her nose superciliously and trotted off to join her children.

Day died. Night descended. Already the stars were out and a new moon peeping coyly over an eastern hill top. I undressed and hung my clothing on the convenient sycamore tree to prevent scorpions and tarantulas from taking up a homestead in my pants; then I turned in. For a time I listened to a lonely coyote shrilling his age-old protest to the indifferent stars—then sleep claimed me.

**T**HE rattle and clatter of tin plates and cooking-gear awakened me sometime later. I had forgotten all about stowing them in the rumble before turning in. Undoubtedly, an inquisitive animal was investigating them.

I threw off the blankets and leaped out of bed.

I certainly was in anything but a pleasant frame of mind as I charged toward that pile of cooking-gear.

By the merest good fortune I swerved just in time! I saw, in the pale light of the wan young moon, Mrs. Stripes and her children, tails erect, lined up in battle array.

The barrage of "perfume" they turned loose missed me by scant inches, but none of it missed the cooking-gear and the after starboard wheel of my car!

Following this salvo, Mrs. Stripes and her children scurried off in the direction I had just come, to look for hiding-places. I could only hope they didn't fire a parting shot at my bed as they passed it.

It was fortunate for me that I had hung my clothing on the lower limb of that sycamore tree. As I dressed, I went over in my mind the best way to sneak into the Los Angeles suburb. Obviously I'd have to keep to back-door highways now! Furthermore, the smart thing for me to do would be to get started at once, while it was dark and I had the chance to slip through the little towns between me and Los Angeles. People would be in bed, and I wouldn't be noticed. If I hurried, I could reach home by mid-forenoon and maybe by that time, enough of that dynamic incense would be wind-washed from the wheel to make it comparatively easy to have what was left steamed off.

I walked hurriedly over to my bedding, quickly rolled it into a bulky bundle, so big that I couldn't close the turtle-back when I dumped it into the rumble, then climbed in back of the wheel and stepped on the starter.

On the highway, rolling along at forty, that aroma didn't bother me. Robust as it was, it couldn't beat up against the forty-knot wind that the speed of my car was making. I felt hopeful. Maybe by the time I reached the outskirts of Los Angeles, the speed-created wind would have "washed" so much of the odor away that I wouldn't be in much danger of being stopped by a traffic cop and given a ticket for driving a malodorous nuisance.

Through jerkwater towns, past farm-houses sprawling sleepily on either side of the highway, and on into a small village I went; then the spluttering cough of my carburetor informed me that I was just about out of gas. I had only enough to roll into a service station.

The night attendant came out sleepily rubbing his eyes and nodded in the affirmative when I held up five fingers to indicate the amount of gas I wanted. He was holding his nose in a very wide-awake manner a moment later when he went to the rear to put it in.

"Gosh!" he said gaspingly, as he held out his hand for the money. "Yer certainly drivin' a sweet-smellin' rose! An army of skunks try to board you?" he asked. He ducked inside and slammed the door. I turned the car back onto the highway.

**I**T was well past daylight when I entered a little town which for obvious reasons—and because I'm in bad with the judge and the traffic cop there—I

shall call Sapville. Anyway, the term is descriptive of both "the judge" and the cop.

I couldn't account for so many people being out that early in the morning until I saw a big banner stretched across the street, announcing a fiesta beginning that day.

Glancing into the rear-view mirror, I noticed that those I passed held tightly to their noses as they glared at my re-treating car. Evidently, that perfume had lost none of its virility and vigor. The best thing for me to do was to get out of town as soon as I could. I stepped on the gas.

I had reached the farther outskirts of the town when the banshee yowl of a police siren caused me to look again into the mirror. Sure enough, following me was a traffic cop!

I pulled over to the curb and stopped.

"What's the trouble?" I asked, when he came alongside.

"This over-ripe piece of limburger yer drivin', fer one thing; an' yer hurry, fer another. In a nut-shell, yer pinched fer speedin'."

WHEN we got back to town, he made me park in a little alley, behind a disreputable-looking dump that seemed to be doing duty as a justice court; then after a brief squint at my hastily bundled bedding showing above the edge of the rumble, he nodded for me to follow him.

The magistrate was an old fellow with calculating eyes and chin-whiskers which moved up and down like the blades of a pair of scissors as he chewed on his quid of tobacco. He was a scissor-bill if I ever saw one—and I knew what to expect.

The cop filed his charge of speeding and driving a malodorous nuisance on the streets of Sapville at a high rate of speed, endangering the life and limb of the town's citizens. The judge turned his head to direct a copious stream of tobacco at an indignant little lizard that had been catching flies near his desk, then looked up at me.

"Ye heerd the charge," he said in a tone that told me everything was over except collecting the fine or shoving me into the jug. "Guilty or not guilty?"

I figured that I might as well be hanged for an old mule as a spring lamb. Anyway, it seemed that everything had gone wrong since Mrs. Stripes had introduced herself and family. I was sore. Besides, this looked like one of those

traffic-fine rackets prevalent in many little towns. I was stung; very well, I would speak my little piece and take the consequences.

"Why don't you two cut out the horse-play and just tell me what the fine is?" I snapped. "But let me warn you, I have no money, and even if I did have, I'd pay no fine."

"Ten dollars or ten days fer speedin' and drivin' a nuisance," the judge said imperturbably in the same cut-and-dried tone, and added: "An' an additional ten dollars or ten days fer contempt o' court. Take him away, Sam," he concluded to the bestarred cop standing beside me.

Sam took my arm and started for the door, then suddenly stopped. "Come to think of it, Jedge," he said, looking perplexedly at that judicial luminary, "they aint no beddin' in the jug. Thet hobo we threw in las' week burnt it up with a cigarette-butt."

The judge sat and scratched his head in a puzzled manner. Before he had an opportunity to say anything, Sam spoke again. "It's O.K., Jedge. I know where I kin git some. This feller's got a roll o' it in the back of his car. I'll go git it." He turned to grin foxily at me before he started outside to get my roll of bedding.

A moment later, his sun-tanned face barely visible above the big bundle of bedding in his arms, Sam strutted in and walked over to the judge's desk. "Here 'tis," he said cockily, holding onto a couple of corners and flipping the bundle to unroll it.

The lower bulk of the blankets had but partially unrolled when a small black-and-white striped animal dropped from the folds of enveloping bedding—and the judge, Sam and I made a home-run for the door.

FAST as we moved, that essence moved faster. We were strangling by the time we reached the sidewalk. Even as I was visualizing how that skunk kitten must have dived into my blankets when I had frightened it and Mrs. Stripes, and wondering what Sam and the judge would do now to supply me bedding for the time I would be in their jug, the judge, who was holding his nose with one hand while he waved the other in a shooing manner at me, gaspingly yelled:

"Git out o' this town an' stay out! Yore sentence's suspended, but ef ye ever come afore me ag'in, I'll send ye up fer life! Now git!"





# To Be Shot

*An American soldier-of-fortune was condemned to death by Sandino for refusing to attack the advancing Marines.*

**D**ISGUSTED because I had been rejected by every branch of Uncle Sam's forces on account of a slight defect in hearing, I left my home in Minneapolis some years ago and went to Mexico. As I had been educated in two private military academies, I was not long in finding use for my talents in a Mexican revolution, and embarking upon a career as a soldier-of-fortune. For twelve years I had fought all over the face of the globe: with the French Foreign Legion, with Kerensky in Russia, in the Gran Chaco in South America, and as a general in the armies of Marshal Chang Tso Lin, mighty war-lord of Manchuria. At the time of this episode, I had drifted into Nicaragua and was a colonel in the insurrecto forces of General Augusto Sandino.

With a detachment of two hundred men I had been scouting the jungle for eight or ten days in search of the enemy. Early the previous evening a courier from Sandino's headquarters ninety miles distant had ridden into my camp bearing a message from Sandino, that he had received word concerning an enemy force advancing through the jungle not far from my present locale, and orders for me to prepare an ambush for them at a spot where a well-defined road through an abandoned banana-plantation ended, and the dense tropical growth of Nicaragua surrounded it on three sides.

We made a hurried night march, and before sunrise were in our positions ready to pour a withering cross-fire into the ranks of our unsuspecting foe, when they marched into the trap. As soon as everything was in readiness, I ordered Sergeant Gonzales to ride down the road in the direction of the enemy, observe their strength and report back to me. As we were insurrectos, and wore no uniforms, it was an easy matter for him to discard his weapons and appear to be a harmless peon. Inside of two hours he came galloping back, greatly excited.

"*Mi Commandante!*" he gasped, as he slid from his foam-flecked horse. "They are *Americanos!*"

"Nonsense, Ramon. The half-light of dawn has deceived you," I retorted. "There are no *Americanos* with the Federalista army."

"But yes! I am quite positive," he panted. "They have the khaki uniforms and bayonets of *Americanos*. They are camped about an hour's ride from here."

To say that I was puzzled, would be putting it mildly. I knew of several white men of various nationalities serving with the Nicaraguan Government, but nothing of any group of Americans. There was only one thing to do, and that was to check on it myself. I laid aside my saber and pistols, and with Gonzales leading the way, set out. Forty-five minutes later we dismounted and crept through the dense undergrowth until we could see into the camp. . . . Ramon had been right: Methodically going about their business of preparing breakfast and getting ready to break camp, was a detail of forty-eight United States Marines, commanded by a lieutenant.

**M**OTIONING Gonzales to follow me, I returned to our horses and rode rapidly back to my men. I immediately gave orders to abandon the ambush and march to Sandino's headquarters.

The camp of the main army of the insurrectos consisted largely of a motley assortment of crude shelters and leantos, and four or five small huts stoutly built of native timbers. I at once hurried to the one occupied by General Sandino, to report.

"And it was a good thing I found out in time," I finished. "It would have been a terrible mistake if they had marched into the ambush, and our men had opened fire."

"The mistake was yours, Colonel Hearn," Sandino replied coldly. "You had your orders to ambush them."

"But they are my countrymen," I remonstrated. "And we are fighting the Nicaraguan Government, not the United States."

"We are fighting anybody who attacks Sandino," he retorted. "The United



# at Dawn

By RUSSELL HEARN



States is sending Marines to capture me; therefore they too are our enemies. Take your men and return to ambush them in another likely place."

"I am sorry, but I cannot fire upon my own countrymen. I must resign my commission and leave your forces," I said as I unbuckled my saber and pistols and dropped them on the ground.

"You have your orders. Take your men and leave quickly to trap the *Americanos*," snarled Sandino.

"Orders be damned!" I retorted.

He barked a command, and I was immediately ringed by scowling faces and menacing weapons. Another quick command, and my hands were bound, and I was thrust into one of the timber huts, the heavy bar dropped across the outside and two guards stationed in front. It was high noon. The hut in which I was a prisoner had one heavily barred window, and through it I could see the entire camp. Several officers entered General Sandino's quarters; and as they emerged an hour or so later, one, Colonel Velasquez, came over to my window and informed me that the main army was going to retire deeper into the jungles, but that a captain and seventy-five men would remain in this camp. And at dawn, he said, I was to be shot. . . .

There was not even so much as a box to sit on in my prison, so for hours I paced the floor, trying in vain to work the bonds loose from my hands. I tried backing up and rasping the knots against the rough bark, but all I succeeded in doing was to rub a lot of skin off my knuckles and wrists. About five-thirty I stepped to my window and gazed out at the confusion attendant upon breaking camp. They evidently intended to march before midnight, for instead of cooking their usual supper, they were eating a cold meal as they worked.

The usual women camp-followers were bustling about, helping their *soldados* gather their belongings. Not far from my window stood one named Maria, whose sweetheart had been one of my men, and whose brother I had saved from

almost certain death when I had interceded for him after he had been caught asleep on sentry-duty. Surely here was someone who could be depended upon to feel kindly enough toward me to do me a last favor! I called her. She came to the window, and immediately the watchful guard stepped to her side.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"In my saddlebags you will find nearly five hundred dollars in American money. You will also find a small red-covered notebook and inside the cover the name of my aunt in the United States," I told her. "You may keep the money, if you will write her a letter and tell her what happened to me."

She shrugged and walked away. I thought that at least she might have answered me. I resumed the task of trying to free my hands, hoping that perhaps if I could get loose, I might be able to jump the guard and make a break for it when they brought me something to eat. But it was useless; the fellow who tied those knots certainly knew his stuff. To top it all, they evidently were not going to bring me food or drink, either, for it was now after seven o'clock, and although I was parched for a drink of water, and asked each of my guards, who now numbered four, for a drink, they paid no attention to my request.

The late twilight was beginning to fade into darkness, when again I saw Maria. I called to her and told her that I was thirsty.

"You are maybe hungry too?" she asked.

I admitted that I was, and she said that the army would be leaving in a few minutes, and she would bring me food and drink.

I CURSED myself for a fool for not riding on into that Marine camp three days ago. I would then have found that the Marines were after Sandino, instead of just surmising that my orders to trap them were a mistake. Of course, being deep in the jungle and out of touch with the world for months at a time, I had



had no means of knowing that the United States had entered the field against the General. I could see it all clearly now:

Wily Sandino, getting me to ambuscade Marines, knowing full well that once the shots were fired on United States forces I would have no choice but to continue—and win, lose or draw, I would be a hunted man, forced to fight from then on in self-defense, and forced to be loyal to Sandino because I had inadvertently fired upon my own flag.

**A**ROUSED from my reverie by the sound of shouted commands, I went to the window to watch them start the march.

It was now eight-thirty; by nine they had all gone, with the exception of the seventy-five left as a rear guard. The dawn came at about four this season of the year; seven hours until I faced the firing-squad!

I tried the door, thinking that perhaps instead of the firing-squad they might be planning to use that quaint old Spanish custom "the law of the fugitive"—the gag where the prisoner is carelessly allowed an opportunity to escape, then shot in the back. That at least would have given me one chance in a thousand of a get-away; but the door was solid as ever, and my kicks only drew one of the guard to the window to hold up his light and peer in.

The other guards started a roaring fire outside my door and settled down for the night. Between the flare of that fire and the brilliant moonlight, I could see even the leaves on the trees of the dense jungle surrounding us. Therefore when at just about midnight I saw Maria approaching from the far side of the camp, I could see that she was staggering; however I attributed it to the rather large native basket she was carrying.

Greatly to my surprise, she halted about forty feet from my window and set the basket down. Even then she swayed from side to side, staggered a step or two and then recovered her balance. Her hair was disheveled, and it began to dawn on me that she was beautifully plastered.

She stooped over and took a blanket from the top of the basket, and with exaggerated carefulness spread it out upon the ground; she then set out a half-dozen or so articles of food, and a large jug of liquor. Cocking her head to one side, she surveyed her handiwork, and then in a thickened voice called the guards.

When they came, she began to laugh and giggle in a maudlin way.

"Look!" she blurted. "The *Americano* is hungry, he is thirsty; he tell me where I can find his money, and ask me to bring him food and drink!"

The four guards roared with laughter.

If I could have got my hands on her, I would have throttled her. Treacherous wench! She had evidently taken my money to blow on a wild spree, and not satisfied with that, had come to torment and taunt me.

"It is a pity the *Americano* cannot come out and join us in our feast," she laughed. "Come, José, Lupe, Felix and Juan, let us sit down, and eat and drink to the kind heart of the señor who so thoughtfully provides me with so many good American dollars."

They all sat around the blanket and began to carouse, wolfing down the food, and as the minutes passed, slobbering wine all over themselves. Disgusted, I turned away from the window and lay down on the floor. By one o'clock the entire camp had gone to sleep with the exception of the quintet outside my window. Exhausted physically and mentally, I dozed off myself. . . .

I awoke to realize that someone was gently shaking me. "Wake up—wake up!" whispered a voice. "Hurry—it is almost dawn!"

I rose unsteadily to my feet. A keen knife swiftly severed my bonds. A pistol was thrust into my hand. It was that pitch-black period just before the dawn. I could not see my benefactor, but side by side we left the hut and ran for the shelter of the jungle. For half an hour we plunged steadily ahead through the thick growth, my rescuer leading the way. Then as the day broke and we came to a small clearing, the figure ahead turned—and I saw that it was Maria!

My face must have been indeed a picture of surprise.

"Yes! Yes! I knew what you must have been thinking of me," she said. "But it was the only way that I could lull suspicion."

"The guards?" I asked.

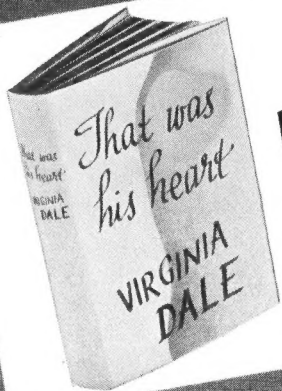
"Poisoned!" she laconically stated.

**I**T took us nearly two weeks, twisting and dodging and reversing our direction several times, to reach Managua and safety. She still had most of my money left, but I told her to keep it. She planned to go to South America. I returned to the U. S. A.

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